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Rib

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LETTERS

Schizophrenia

Dear Spare Rib,
I am a new reader and admire what you're doing a lot - but I'd like to take issue with you for the trend in the article on schizophrenia. I'm a student with the Richmond Fellowship, one of the organisations which provide half way houses and last year "worked" in a house two days a week. To "work" there means to talk and listen hour by hour - honest conversation about problems.

The people I met labelled schizophrenic were to me and most staff members there, simply people who had had rotten childhoods, really rotten and had not subsequently been able to cope. Drugs had quietened down their "symptoms" - mainly different manifestations of unhappiness - without relieving the cause. With the support of the house many were able to gain insight into the cause of their difficulties and begin to work through them and then reduce drug dosage. Obviously drugs relieve distress but they also slow people up and dull creativity etc - it is sad that our society relies on them. You can see I am a disciple of Laing and his

approach, cf. the film "Family Life".

I think it is a little easy for relatives and the sufferer herself (or himself) to pin the blame on chemical dysfunction as your article tended to do and avoid the emotional reasons for distress. Maybe the materialisation of our society contributes a lot too.

Best Wishes,
Pat Preston,
London SE7.

Dear Spare Rib,

Surely as a progressive magazine, in tune with contemporary radical feeling, you should have felt dubious about the article on Schizophrenia (Carol Morrell, issue 27), which would look far more at home within the pages of Woman's Own.

As most liberals or radicals should, by now, be aware, the acceptance of the proposition that "Schizophrenia is most probably a 'genetically inherited, biochemically mediated disease'" is a sign of gross reaction (on the part of a Trained Psychiatrist), or unfortunate, but

not irremedial ignorance on the part of a 'layman'. A growing body of thought and evidence, much of it from within the establishment, supports the view that diagnoses of schizophrenia are ambiguous, harmful and totally inconsistent, varying from one psychiatrist, hospital or country to the next, often depending upon their political or moral outlook and having little to do with any medical experience. No wonder then that we find no single cause or no one effective treatment. We probably don't have a 'disease', and could do without such terms as 'illness', 'sufferer' and 'patient', used unblushingly in the article. The Medical Model for Mental 'Illness' is simply a blind alley, and in addition, socially and politically disturbing. It arose in the days of scientific optimism, when Psychiatry, seeking to emulate its awesome parent, Western Medicine, allied itself with Pure Science. Thus we have experts in 'mental disease' on a par with experts in dermatology, glandular fever or malaria. But the two fields are more different than chalk from cheese. Imagine asking a radio engineer, an expert on circuits, transistors and oscillators, to do something about the political bias of our B.B.C. 1 programmes. To concentrate *entirely* on genetic or biological determinants for 'aberrations' in social behaviour is to play into the hands of an academic and professionally insulated power elite which persistently avoids any analysis of the psycho-social effects of an unjustifiably stratified society; an elite which escapes self-criticism by finding causes contained *solely* within the individual, for e.g.: - soccer violence, criminal behaviour, school failure, drug addiction and even, would you believe, alienation.

I am not just bitching. The issue is crucially important. Many a housewife, having been convinced by G.P. or Psychiatrist that she is "suffering from the mental 'illness' of depression or anxiety" has had her last feeble, disguised protest swamped by largactyl or electric shocks. Women suffer doubly from the incredibly powerful chauvinism of the medical profession. Please don't let Spare Rib increase the mysticism. Considering your position you should have at least mentioned other therapies, other thinkers: - Rogers, Szasz, Laing, Cooper, or the easily readable 'Not Made of Wood' by Jean Foudraire. And you could have directed readers toward the general area of Radical Therapy as well as toward the arms of our experts.

Yours,
Hugh Coolican
Psychology Lecturer.

Sterilisation

Dear Spare Rib,
I enclose a copy of part of the letter

I sent to Nancy Jones after reading hers on sterilisation in Spare Rib No 28. I went on to give details of how my husband and I have come to terms with my lack of interest in sex, providing a workable compromise for us both based on mutual understanding and absolute honesty.

Dear Nancy,
I have just read your letter headed 'Sterilisation' and was sufficiently shocked by your last sentence to take a pen immediately and write to you. I am sorry that you think you are not 'normal' and want to tell you that in my opinion it is quite normal to become uninterested in sex after all need or desire for reproduction has ceased. I am sure that, like mine, your attitude to sex would have changed even if you had not undergone the operation. Think about it this way - a woman's desire for sex is directly caused by her reproductive drive, even though this may be subconscious. Obviously your reproductive drive was over, that is why you wanted to be sterilised. Therefore it was quite normal and natural for your sexual desires to wane also - in fact, it appears that it would be unusual for them not to do so.

There is too much brain-washing of women (started by men and unfortunately perpetuated by women) that leads them to believe that they should want sex all their lives and gives them terrible feelings of guilt when it ceases to have any pleasure. They feel they must keep up the pretence in order to give their husbands pleasure and this in turn leads to feelings of frustration and oppression. Women should stand up for their sexual right - not to be fucked when they find it boring, time-wasting, distasteful or downright disgusting. No, you are not alone with this problem. Yes, you are normal. Sincerely,
Christine Cooper,
Surrey.

'Free' prescriptions

Dear Spare Rib,
Until June, 1974, I had paid my GP 25p. for writing a private prescription for the Pill, on my last visit in August 1974, I paid my G.P. 36p for a 'free' prescription, and I phoned clinic A, and found that they only opened in the afternoons, and as I do not work in the area that was no good. However, they suggested Clinic B, although I said that Clinic B, was not on my list, I was told that did not matter, and I even phoned Clinic B to make sure, and was told to bring my prescription along. On arrival during the evening at Clinic B, I was told that they could not give me the Pill, as they were a NHS clinic and not a Local Authority clinic. Even although I said I would pay I was told that this was not allowed. It was suggested that I came back in a

LETTERS

week's time and saw the doctor, that seemed a bit much, as apart from already having my prescription, I would be without the Pill for over a week. It was suggested that I went to clinic C, which would be open the following evening, and I rang Clinic C next day to make sure, and the lady who answered the phone told me that I could go to clinic D, although it was not on the list, but to play safe I insisted that I could go to Clinic C.

I went to clinic C and got three packets of the Pill shoved in my hand pretty quickly, but when I got the packets home, there were no instructions with them, and although I do know how the Pill has to be taken, there must be many who are unsure especially if they are taking them for the first time.

With all the phone-calls and the inconvenience caused, and the lack of instructions and the Pills not even in their usual packets, and the fact that clinics cannot be visited as easily as a chemist, where is the real gain in getting 'free' what formerly was paid for?

Your sincerely,
H. Walker,
London N7.

Drink More? feel good?

Dear Spare Rib,

Whilst sitting in the Wisor Castle, Harrow Road, London, W.9. on Wednesday 4 September, my boyfriend and I were having a chat during Dr. Feelgood's break, when one of the barmen came up and collected our empty glasses. Much to our surprise, he instructed us to buy another drink or leave the pub. We informed him that we would buy another drink when WE felt like it, but this wasn't good enough, and he continued to harass us.

Needless to say, we had every intention of buying drinks before being approached, our glasses only being empty because the bar was engulfed by people and we were waiting until things were less hectic in that area. We were, however, reluctant to go and buy a drink at someone's command.

My boyfriend asked to speak to the Manager, to try and give him our point of view, but much to our dismay, he gave us the same option.

In the 5 minutes that followed, we were threatened by several people "leave the pub or else", but having caused no disturbance or annoyance to anyone other than exercise the privilege of choosing when to go to the bar, we stayed put.

My boyfriend was then approached by 4 heavies, who twisted his arm, badly bruising it, and violently manoeuvred him to the door and threw him down the steps. Meanwhile I sat stunned into immobilisation, not able to take in what was happening, when they came back for me. I was pushed to the door (it didn't take 4) and when I tried to verbally retaliate, was

given a punch in the back and sent flying down the steps, twisting my ankle and breaking the heel of my shoe.

We spoke to the police about this incident and it appears that the publican was well within his rights removing us in this way, even though we were innocent of any offence other than hesitating before going to the bar.

Yours sincerely,
Eileen McGeeney
London SW6

Nature of oppression

Dear Sisters,

In "Letters", No. 26, R.M.C. Chandler urges us to send more women to Parliament since "constitutional reform is the only possible way of achieving real change". She feels that increasing the number of women MP's would result in favorable social changes, especially where women's rights are concerned.

When the suffrage movement was in full swing, women claimed that social injustices, bad working conditions, and even wars would end when women had the vote. We don't need to look too far to see that this was not the case because these ills cannot be removed through legislation. The State (government) cannot remove social inequalities because it is the main agency of those inequalities. It may, indeed, ameliorate conditions through increasing family allowance, enacting equal pay laws, free school milk, and so on, but it will never remove the basis of these inequalities - the monopoly of the means of production, wage slavery, etc. - because the State was and continues to be the chief instrument for permitting the few to monopolize the wealth we create.

State capitalism (Russia, China, et al) would only increase the powers of bureaucracy and capitalism. In place of government by permanent representatives subject to occasional election and by career bureaucrats who are virtually immovable, we must manage our own affairs through free associations operating without authority imposed from above. In such a society, production would be based on need, not profit, thus insuring enough for all.

I support the demand for equal pay but if our demands end there, the result is merely that we all are slaves together. We must demand an end to the system which robs us of most of what we produce, that relegates some of us to an inferior status, and that readily discards us when we cease to be producers or consumers. It is the very nature of government that oppresses us and we can't change things by voting in a few more women.

Yours for a better world,
Elaine Godina,
Oldham, Lancs.

Dear Spare Rib,

I am watching with interest the women's strike at Salford Electrical Instruments factory, Heywood Lancs. The women, all AUEW members, occupied the factory with union support for their demand for bonuses equal to those earned by men doing the same job, but the men decided to work as usual and forced their way into the factory on Monday, Sept. 30th. These men are clearly acting against their own class interest, obviously we can see why, but it still doesn't excuse them.

Now, 'during the last miners' strike, I put up some Kentish miners who were picketing power stations. These miners said they all volunteered for picketing so as to avoid having to do housework while they were on strike.

They were also anti-family allowances and women working etc etc. I was extremely angry with their attitudes, yet when I said so to the other women I immediately came up against the strong taboo on criticising working-class men, currently prevalent in left wing circles. The working man is put on a pedestal; he can do no wrong, his every strike is a brave blow in the fight against capitalism. Rubbish! His sense of solidarity with women is nil. Sometimes you have to be honest about who your enemy is in a particular situation and for the women of Salford Electrics, it's not the union, it's their brother workers, as well as the management.

When men put us women on a pedestal, idealised etc, we can see very clearly how it is really a subtle put-down. So what is it when the working-class man is put on a pedestal? (The pernicious influence of the male middle-class left?) Power to the Sisters,
Celia Berridge,
Greenwich, London SE10.

Infantile?

Dear Spare Rib,

Please, please do hurry through your obvious period of infancy (too often reflected in the anger that comes through in your articles and especially evident in the subject matters covered). Not all of us are interested in the collective bargaining efforts of factory workers in the North. Is it really necessary to devote valuable space detailing "gay" contacts, clubs, literature, etc., when any intelligent reader can find this information easily - "Alternative London" being one source.

My personal feeling about being a member of Women's Liberation is that just as a plumbers' union does not make a good plumber, neither does membership in Women's Liberation brighten about the personal liberation I am presuming the members are seeking. Though valuable from a collective bargaining and pressure-bearing

aspect, it cannot possibly serve the purpose of personal liberation but I can see the value in the feeling of kinship.

I have been more fortunate than most. As an only child it was not until I reached late adolescence that I was aware of "the double standard" and it was not until I came to England six years ago that I saw for myself that there were women who were not only treated as second-class citizens but who actually FELT like second-class citizens.

Many, many changes need to come about in terms of attitudes and laws and I therefore offer my support to your noble efforts. But, Spare Rib, please grow and develop quickly so that I may soon feel a closer kinship with my sisters here in England.
Most Sincerely,
J.P. Wickstrom
London SE1

Self starvation

Dear Spare Rib,

I have just read your article "Self Starvation" in your issue No. 28 with great interest and, I must admit, a certain amount of horror. To think that people totally reject food as their natural fuel, not only to conform to the feminine stereotype shown in the fashion magazines, but also to gain attention to the point of obsession; even for isolation purposes, and then go into hospital, a harrowing experience in a psychiatric ward even in our supposedly ultra-efficient day and age.

One case in hospital didn't seem to stop starvation, and appeared difficult to understand, but also brought home to me the atalistic aspects of the disease.

I think what is even more frightening nowadays is even one of two of anybody's personal friends out of say, five or six people seem to be on a diet! I suppose it's the trendy twentieth century thing to do, to stay model-slim or more particularly to become model-slim.

Surely though, health must come first, and I've learnt that motto the hard way. I do realise that the state of losing weight too rapidly is usually controlled and then becomes uncontrollable, when the disease comes to a head. If you are able to stop this state, even if it does mean psychiatric help, I think it's worth it. They are very sympathetic and not by any means a group of people to shy away from.

Thanks for letting me air my views. I find the article both effective and disturbing.

I know I'll think twice before I say jokingly "I must go on a diet tomorrow", after a second creamy bun.

Best wishes for more articles of this standard,
Neëlle Gill,
Convent of the Assumption,
Oxford.

December

Cover photograph of Mary Cecil (Spare Rib accountant) by Erica Stevenson.

Letters 3,4

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Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts.

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False consciousness coops people up. Women, especially, often feel their reality tunnelling off inside themselves and unless they find a way to help them focus, or unless they chop off the dreamiest parts of themselves, they find it increasingly difficult to live.



Women's liberation and consciousness raising has developed ways of exposing false consciousness.

Consciousness raising is essentially a wider consciousness. It lifts the mysterious veils of womanhood, revealing the layers of ideas about femininity for what they are – threads resplendent with guilt and deceit, intricate patterns of manipulation and an extraordinary physical weight of dependency and fear. It dumps some of this load when it wriggles away from the notion that we have been free to become what we will. When we can understand the way our lives have been determined by our class and our sex, when we can realise that an integral part of false consciousness is being cut off from one another, we can admit to the intertwining of our feelings inside with the world outside.

Also, consciousness raising is not psychotherapy. The mechanism of serious neurosis is too wily to allow itself to be taken apart without more time and experience than is usually available in consciousness raising groups.

Psychoanalysis locates the self in family history. Consciousness raising locates the self in social history. Both ways of understanding have political consequences.

They are also intimately connected. By the end of the 60's the thwarted and wandering imagination of women whose expectations refused to settle down quietly in a corner, ceased whirling around so aimlessly. It was logical that women who experienced the contradictions in their lives in their feelings, and who were expected to be deeply feeling creatures anyway, should be aware of the notions of consciousness opened up by psychoanalysis when they began to explore what their feelings were all about.

Laing had been saying since the 50's that the personal was political, and now the movement towards women's liberation was saying the political is also the personal.

Men mostly thought women's liberation was women's nonsense and, threatened, said what women were saying was too emotional and therefore irrational, or that consciousness raising was merely therapeutic.

women can have today about consciousness?

Freud understood the illusory content of religion but did not completely escape the bonds of mysticism. His theory contained his understanding of consciousness within the person alone, ignoring the effects of external reality. Inside the person a sort of battle was fought, in which civilization and culture had to win over the unruly instincts which were described in a symbolic form as if they were mysterious demons.

Reich studied marxism and went further than this. If our consciousness was how we adapt to the world then it made sense that, to understand it, we had to understand people in their social reality. Our psyches must also manifest the laws of social relations. Reich understood how sexual repression was vital to oppression, and thought the repression of things into the unconscious was itself a political fact. People were alienated from themselves and did not recognise their own emotions for what they really were.

Although radical psychiatry, following Laing, has brought communities for psychotherapy into being as an alternative to institutionalised psychiatry, the practice of most psychoanalysis is to understand problems in the context of family history alone, and the goal of most therapy is still personal change only. It remains split off from the social context of people's lives.

Jo Ryan had been working on these ideas with Vic Seidler and, at a meeting on 'Psychoanalysis and the Left' in June this year, they wanted to present them and explore certain questions further. The meeting was arranged by a group called Radical Philosophy. It shows the effect of the women's movement that consciousness raising was the main issue being discussed. However, Jo hadn't been talking for more than about 5 minutes at the beginning of the afternoon when she was interrupted, and a sort of astonished defensiveness deflected any serious discussion.

Jo and I wanted to talk about it more. We interviewed Amaya, who has been in the women's movement for the last few years. We asked her what the significance has been for her of psychoanalysis and consciousness raising, and what they have meant in terms of personal and political change.



When did you go into analysis?

About 4 years ago when I split up with Chalky, the bloke I'd been living with for 3 years. We'd been together for 6 years and I really felt at a complete loss. We split up rather bitterly because he went off with someone else.

And you still loved him?

Not really. I'd thought about leaving him several times before but for lots of reasons I didn't. In fact, it was a really good thing, it's just that I felt abandoned. If there had been some real options for me I would have agreed to it. I really only thought, then, in terms of other boyfriends and that I had to find someone to replace him.

Were you working?

Yes, I've always worked. I had a very independent intellectual life from him. I saw myself as being this independent career woman, as being more together than lots of women because I had gone to university and got myself a research job. Yet I actually didn't feel all that interested in the work itself, and I blamed myself for that, so the security and confidence I got from it was really undercut by not feeling myself in it.

The collapse of my sexual and emotional relationship threatened me in every way possible. I felt alternately very high and manic, and then very feeble, weak and disintegrating. I needed someone else to be there the whole time, it didn't really matter who. I just felt really abandoned and tragic, hopeless and like a child and vulnerable. I thought if only I was a man I wouldn't be going through these awful feelings, I'd somehow be out in the world. Men sort of carried on and they could sublimate much more of themselves into their work, whereas my work always went by the board if anything happened.

I had been thinking about going into analysis because things between Chalky and me were such a mess, one problem after another. We had these endless talks trying to sort out what was happening between us. We talked in a semi-Freudian way, trying to understand what we thought we were repressing.

How could you do that?

I'd read a certain amount of Freud, and one of our closest friends was in analysis and another knew a lot about analysis. It was our cultural background, a whole way of looking at things in terms of motives people wouldn't readily admit to.

I had one woman friend, who now lives in this house, and we used to spend

ages discussing our feelings – what sorts of things made us depressed, how we felt dependent on the men we were living with, how we felt inadequate and that we didn't have any real interest in the world – that the men were always doing the most exciting things and we were just hanging around somehow.

It wasn't really a woman's consciousness. We related to each other because we were both in this situation with men. We felt insecure if they slept with other people which they did, as we did. The net effect was that we did not really support each other in ways that were constructive because we always regarded our relationship as secondary to the relationship we had with blokes.

We thought about changing ourselves a lot, that if only we could be better people we wouldn't be having all these awful feelings. Although we considered leaving our blokes, that was seen as a bad thing basically. We had a background belief that the deep relationships you had with men were the most important ones and that they gave the ultimate meaning to life.

It was the middle and end of the 60's – university life and, I suppose, a swinging young London scene. We thought you couldn't expect people to be monogamous. It seemed that men, anyhow, were not going to be faithful and you'd better come to terms with that. We thought we were terribly advanced and liberated and in theory we told each other about it. In fact, Chalky and I just got amazingly jealous.

Were your criticisms of the monogamous couple mainly to do with sexual freedom?

Initially, yes. That also meant self-development in relationships and quite clearly that one person couldn't meet all your needs.

Being with another man didn't make you feel more secure?

It did, but in a very bad way. You were having this other relationship to balance out the insecurities in the first relationship. It is a very quantitative approach to your feelings of inferiority which actually is more threatening. So when this crisis happened, I just felt really smashed, and decided on analysis.

My parents were against psychoanalysis, so it seemed kind of risqué somehow, but they were liberal and my father paid for much of it. They thought psychoanalysis wasn't a real science, that there wasn't any evidence you could have, and that analysts just found what they were looking for. Psychology, as I was taught it, is all experimental psychology. It's called the behaviour of organisms and it's all about the behaviour of animals, how rats

learn in mazes, and treating people as though they were machines or information processes. It's awful. I studied all that as a student. Why Freud was wrong, in one essay.

How much did it cost?

£15 a week for 3 sessions. I went for nearly 2 years, on the couch. I found it a fantastic relief that, because I'd paid this bloke and because of his profession, I could go and have all this time to sort myself out without worrying about his part of the relationship as you would if you were talking with a friend.

You don't think you cared about what he thought of you?

Because it was a professional relationship involving payment for certain services, I thought I could use him emotionally how I wanted. He actually accused me of seeing it all much too formally. I never looked at him when I walked through the door, I never said, hello how are you. I thought that was out, because he was the doctor and I was the patient.

Did you accuse you, or did he ask you why you didn't?

It came up in the context of asking me what fantasies I had about him. I gather he was more direct than many analysts, and I think he was right. I did feel the most enormous difficulty in having any direct relationship with him. I used him in this rather clinical way of getting him to react to things I said about myself. That was an extreme form of the difficulties I had in my personal relationships. It was very instructive at that level. We didn't really change that, but I realised what I was doing.

I actually felt more intelligent than the analyst. I looked down on him. I think that was a way of my trying to keep control of the situation. I'd point out inconsistencies in his theoretical assumptions and he'd say let's not talk at this theoretical level, let's get down to the nitty gritty. I did genuinely feel he said things that were inconsistent. On the one hand he said he had no values about what sort of person I ought to be, and that what he was trying to do was make me happy, and yet on the other hand, that I should stay in analysis until I settled down into a stable relationship with one other person.

At the end of the first year I moved into a collective, and he could not take the ideas around then about women's liberation and collective living at the level they came across in my daily life. He tended to explain my reasons for not living in a monogamous, nuclear family in terms of my past family life and my parents. He would ask me what fantasies I had about monogamy. I don't think it's totally invalid to do that, but I do think it's invalid to see it as the only way of relating to people's ideas about how they want to live. He made me feel small, and that there was a whole area of my life that just wasn't worth bringing up in analysis.

If you felt both intellectually superior to him and intellectually put down by him, there were lots of gaps in your understanding of each other?

Yes. To some extent I think analysis was useful, but I don't think it changed me very much and I never believed in it 100%. Partly, it calmed me down when I was in the most amazing panic about myself. It forced me to look at myself. I used to get into cycles of anxiety, when I would get freaked out by one thing and the anxiety would grow and attach itself to lots of other things. Everything got out of control then. He was very good at making me think through exactly what it was in a situation that was making me feel awful.

Was there any similarity in the things that made you anxious?

Yes, basically the threat of rejection and abandonment. I had known that about myself, because I had a hostile relationship with my mother, and my friends pointed it out because it was a very obvious fact. Analysis pressed it home emotionally, so I was absolutely forced to think about that as determining. Before I had not realised what a profound effect it had on a whole way I felt about a lot of things. That bit of analysis was painful because he forced me to think about the pain I was sort of pushing off the whole time.

So, with your friends you had been, in a way, repeating to each other assumptions about your behaviour which did not lead to change, whereas with analysis you came to a different consciousness of what sort of person you were.

Yes. Analysis made me feel less fragile. It gave me a way of handling my vulnerability, or working on it. But it didn't make me feel, day by day, a better person in the world somehow. I felt I had more control, which was terribly important, yet I still felt just as inferior.

Why did you decide to live in a collective?

Ever since I can remember, I've vaguely known that people did live in

communes, and that they shared all the domestic work, and in a very remote way it always seemed a good idea. I'd talked about it with Chalky but it never seemed practicable. Then I think what really happened was that ideas from outside came and influenced people I knew. There were visitors to the university from the German student movement, and from America, who were influenced by the beginning of the American women's movement. They had been living in communes, taking turns at child care and breaking down the isolation of couples and things like that. Then friends I had at university went to visit a really big Danish commune outside Copenhagen, and they were completely mind-blown by it. They came back and more or less said, let's have one. I didn't actually join it, but I was very influenced by those ideas.

I was living on my own then. That did very peculiar things to me in terms of my consciousness of myself. I became incredibly hyperconscious about every moment of my existence in a way that I found stultifying. I became totally aware the whole time of whether I'd blown my nose or not. I was bombarded by myself.

By then I was having a scene with another bloke, but he was living with someone else and when I didn't want to live on my own any longer, it was quite out of the question to live with him.

What about women's liberation?

The important thing was that women's groups were forming in the university town. At first, I felt different from those women. They were campaigning about SS and unsupported mothers and political things like that, which didn't seem very relevant to me. I didn't think of the women who were involved as intellectual or academic. Then all those barriers got broken down by meetings of various kinds, and by the general culture that grew up. The first meeting I went to was an open meeting to publicise what women's liberation was about. The four women speakers made a tremendous impression on me. I'd never seen women like that. Then I started getting to know the women who were campaigning, whom I had known before but not really talked to. I began to go to a consciousness raising group and I read a lot - books by Germaine Greer and Eva Figes were the ones being published then. Very gradually, over about two years, I began to see myself and other women differently.

I had been immersed in academic life and I don't think I realised how bad it was and what it was doing to me. It is incredibly competitive, elitist and meritocratic. People criticised each other the whole time. Seminars were never to work out the truth about anything. Truth was a dirty word. Seminars were to score points off other people. It was intellectually violent, with a sort of pseudo-friendliness grafted on top of that. Everybody grades each other, there's a combination of arrogance and self-confidence, and talking about other people in the most clever terms possible by which you also subtly put people down.

I was split between having a career and also feeling maybe I wanted to have kids, when I was with Chalky, and not know how to combine the two in a way that did justice to both. I had just felt that was a problem for me and, in a sense, I just suffered from the problem uselessly. I began to see that this situation was not just a personal dilemma.

I had felt inferior because I didn't wake up in the morning thinking about my work as men seemed to do. With the women's movement and consciousness raising came the understanding that feeling put down was a state you got into very easily because you were a woman. It was actually a political act to realise that, and to realise that, instead of just feeling awful about it, you had to externalise it, project it back.

A political attitude meant you didn't feel you just had to pull your socks up and get on with things, but that you were frequently put down for various things which had very little to do with yourself. A whole category of you as a woman was probably being used, regardless of what you were actually like. However, you had been interpreting it personally, in terms of yourself and nothing else. That difference is very important, and very different from the sort of support that analysis gave.

Analysis did not change my perception of how I fitted into the world. When I was living with Chalky I interpreted everything he did that made me feel bad as his not liking me enough. I never saw it as standard male behaviour, getting away with what he could get away with.

Consciousness raising took away a lot of the subjective burden. I wanted to live in a collective, although I was nervous about going into the first one, about things like privacy, and I was defined as less political than the others in the house. We thought that, in order to work, it had to be not only a collective domestic unit, but a collective political unit as well.

Did you talk about those things with your analyst?

It was very difficult to. He tried, but he just couldn't imagine what it was like living with people who were intent on breaking down their nuclear

couple relationships. It relied on my explaining a whole lot of new ideas which I wasn't quite sure about then. He kept saying I seemed to have a whole lot of friends who were highly disturbed, all sick people.

I developed a total resistance to talking. That's really classic, you lie there for hours in silence, but I felt I ceased needing analysis in terms of support. Then I was splitting up with this other bloke and I didn't want to spend a lot of time in the analysis exploring my feelings about that. It was a turning away from yet another emotional upheaval somehow. Changing my life situation seemed more relevant than getting deeper into all the things that had come up about my mother and all that. I lay there thinking, that's two bob, every minute.

He began to feel like an unnecessary luxury. You don't think you were being obstinate?

Yes. I think the fact that I'd failed to develop what he regarded as a relationship which had some fantasy content between him and me, a transference relationship, was very negative. The analysis stopped and afterwards I dreamed about him once or twice, which really surprised me, so it was obviously there. I think I felt guilty about being able to afford it.

Were you worrying about helping yourself at all?

Yes, but I think the difficulty I experienced in taking myself seriously got worked out in analysis. He taught me to take myself seriously.

However, being in analysis had begun to disturb me politically. It was completely split off from the rest of my life. You go off to see him, you have this completely unequal relationship when you get there, everything that you experience as a problem is explained by things in you, and it does not lead you to discuss the problems you had with people at the time you were having them. I was living collectively with people who were trying to see things as much more socially determined. It's as if you go off to your doctor and come back with a formula which you apply to the person you are interacting with. The other person may not accept that. You also end up seeing it in emotional terms, whether the other person arouses feelings of jealousy in you, instead of trying to understand what people are trying to do with their lives, different roles in the house and things like that. The discussion we had in the household was more person-to-person, and not second hand like those I'd had about people when I was living with Chalky.

Were there any differences in the speed at which awareness came in the process of analysis and living in the collective?

I feel it's much faster in the collective. You are confronted by situations you just have to respond to. In analysis nothing is ever forced upon you. In collective living that's just not on. People's needs aren't like that. It's less predictable and you can't control it, though I'm sure I've tried damn hard to.

So it pushes you along despite yourself?

You share a commitment to working things out in a certain way, to be self-reflective and to create something. In a couple relationship, which is based on emotional and sexual attraction, there are often complete disagreements about what people want out of the relationship, different expectations and definitions of the situation. It's been important in lessening the feeling that I'm struggling on my own for I'm not quite sure what.

I wish I could describe it better because it really affects my everyday life, as I walk along the street. That's the way I think the women's movement has been the most important influence in my life. I began to sense how arbitrary it was that you ended up having sexual relationships with men. It seems you cut off half of humanity from possible interaction with yourself.

I left the first collective I went into about 2 years ago and joined one in London. It was a definite decision, to make it into an all-women collective. I got a hell of a lot out of defining myself as part of this social, political kind of movement.

Do you think others have the same need to identify with a movement as you have had?

I think lots of people have a need for what you might call a purpose to life, at one level or another. Often children supply that for women and jobs do for men. I've always been completely hung up about what's the meaning of life, and men didn't seem to relate to that. I would put the purpose into the couple relationship which must have been awful for the bloke, really undermining. That's where the politics fits in, to some extent. It's part of an increasing social consciousness I've acquired about myself, about my parents and their class position, and my sex position, and position in history.

What happened in the women's collective?

The personal relationships were stronger than the political relationships. We supported each other in a lot of ways, and a lot of my security depended on my sense of solidarity with other women. I don't think anyone really worked out their political ideas much through each other. It was a good personal collective, but I was beginning to have a clearer idea then about what political things I wanted to be involved in. Consciousness raising, for me, has been done as much with people I've lived with collectively as in consciousness raising groups, and by reading as well.

What did you discover about yourself?

I became aware that I tended to play what you might call a male role, in a sense of organising things. I became aware of that as I moved through situations. It was helped by discussion but not the tortuous process of talking over and over events. I don't come across as dominating in standard sorts of ways, so it has taken a long time to understand.

I felt a lot of my emotional, although not my sexual, needs were being met by women.

What about your political ideas?

Politics has been a way of seeing life as a whole, society as a whole. I did not have a sense of total processes before – not even remotely. That's an understanding marxism has given me. Everything had just seemed separate from everything else. What I thought about work didn't have any connexion to what I thought about education, or sex.

And so I think I confirm my identity now, less by worrying about it, than by actually doing things with other people, particularly women. Becoming conscious of your own situation doesn't free you from the situation, and the contradictions in it, although you still have to struggle with them.

What about how you live now?

I'm in a collective in which I am also working with people politically. It feels very different. I find I get on with people who, if I weren't working with politically, I might not actually be friends with.

What about friends?

I think it's important to sustain other friendships and not to see people only through a political kind of grid, because there are values which tend to get dropped. But the conflict came in the household with women when I was spending a lot of time on personal relationships with people I liked, but also wanting to work politically with other people. Here we have set up a working relationship which involves a lot of comradeship, and which is not based only on personal attractiveness. Although you certainly develop good feelings, and bad feelings for that matter, about people.

You could say we are a libertarian interventionist group, in which much more attention is paid to personal politics – by the men as well as the women – than in many other left groups.

How is your personal change connected with your political change now?

I attempt to express my feelings when they happen, rather than let them accumulate and come out in devious ways, or need a whole explosion or discussion session to set it right again. It doesn't solve all the problems by any means. It's somehow reassuring. I feel I'm becoming a more ordinary person.

At university everybody was concerned to be different from each other. There was an inflated sense of individual specialness and much less recognition of the similarities between people. Becoming part of the women's movement and now working in a political collective means you identify *with* rather than *against* people, some people at least. I have a more objective, and less inflated, sense of self.

Here, the women in the household are working on a food co-op with the women on an estate. Both places are a community, but at university people felt they had made a choice, whereas on the estate everyone is more or less thrown together by a common social force. Because of their economic situation they are nearer the essentials of survival in a way that I never was. Some of the women I've met, both on this estate and in political groups generally, are more direct in the things they ask you, and the way they say things about themselves, and the way you are expected to say things about yourself. Talk at my parents' home had to be interesting, or civilised, or important. Now I talk more about what I would have considered either boring or slightly embarrassing details, which I was always suppressing. I really think that's an example of how political change ought to affect the way people relate to each other.



Illustration from 'The Sexual Politics of Sickness'

if SOCIAL WORK ISN'T WOMEN'S WORK, WHAT IS IT?

By Sue Sharpe

What does social work involve? How is it structured and organised, what sort of problems are confronted, and what do social workers think and feel about their work?

Images conjured up by the thought of social work are often still bound up with the old style notions of charity and welfare – well-meaning middle class ladies bearing formidably down on the deserving poor. But social work has moved on a long way from there, gradually moulded, expanded and professionalised into one of today's acceptable careers. It is traditionally women's work, and the qualities demanded – to be sympathetic, cheerful, caring and helpful, are those allotted to women, especially in their roles as wives and mothers. Perceived and defined in this way, it suffered the consequent devaluation and low prestige ascribed to feminine occupations. This, together with its roots in voluntary work, provided an early basis for a situation of low pay and selfless dedication.

The face of social work is, however, rapidly changing. Salary rises have, for instance, removed pay as a deterrent to men entering the field, and their growing numbers have simultaneously helped to legitimise further increases. This has accelerated a change in

job status, but not always to the equal advantage of women – in this, like many



"WELLMEANING MIDDLE CLASS LADIES BEARING DOWN ON THE DESERVING POOR..."

other areas, men tend to move more quickly and easily up the promotional ladders. I visited the social services department of one London borough. It is impossible to present any typical representation, since organisation, problems and individuals differ from place to place, but I hope the picture that emerges will trace out the situations faced by many urban social work teams.

In this area team, there are 12 social workers, 4 ancillary workers and 4 administration. These divide into 2 sections – the Intake team and the Longterm team. The Longterm team concentrates on the traditional approach to problems – to set up ongoing personal relationships, monitor crises, and give support and material aid. This is called casework. It has historically looked for the source of problems in individual character defects, which often involves building up lengthy case histories. Over the years, this orientation has become increasingly inadequate. Bad housing, poverty, unemployment impose devastating effects on ordinary people, suddenly turning them into 'problems'. Individuals and families fall out of the cracks in the social system into the reception of the



"LEAKS IN THE ROOF ARE SYMBOLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF YOUR PERSONAL CHARACTER DEFECTS, MRS. INADEQUATE."

social services departments. Here social workers examine their positions, explain their rights and the complex rules to be followed, and offer the available help and resources.

The Intake Team

I spent most of my time with this team, which comprised 5 women and 3 men of whom two (one man and one woman) worked as ancillaries. They worked in a section of the town hall, all crowded together in one side of a big office that had been divided by a partition. Three telephones were constantly on the go, and the telephonist, who was hopefully waiting for the long-promised exchange system to be installed, leapt from phone to phone clutching her notepad. People continuously wandered in and out, making phonecalls, going to interview people and having discussions amongst themselves.

The Intake team system is relatively new. It began to be adopted about 2 years ago and has developed with and contributed to the changing style of social work, as a response to the crises caused by the failing provision of day-to-day needs. Intake work is therefore more problem oriented than casework, and services immediate survival needs. The emphasis in this team is on people bringing in their problems, rather than being visited at home, and the department is open from 9.30 am - 5 pm without appointment for this purpose. Those who come in (called 'clients'), are mainly women and elderly or unemployed men. They report to a reception where their file is located (unless they are new) and are subsequently interviewed in tiny rooms, whose cold spartan atmosphere reminded me of the interview rooms in my local police station.

The social workers each do 2 days duty per week, and have 2 days for following up action arising from duty days. One day is reserved for internal meetings and the allocation of any home visiting. The nature and content of a duty day varies erratically. 'Some days it is very quiet and others there are people waiting at 9.15 am.' Interviews may be long or short, may run over the lunch hour or on after 5 pm. The action arising from problems is usually administered by telephone or letter. Some interviews may be long, some only need one phonecall, while others may be brief and yet involve a barrage of phoning, writing and arranging. If the duty day is quiet, the 'duty officer' may have time to write up the files, but if not this is another task for the follow-up day. All new cases also come in via the Intake team, and if it seems after about a month that they will need continuous attention and

follow-up, they are allocated to the Longterm team. This is not always a simple process, as longterm workers often carry large caseloads which cannot expand indefinitely - there are always many unallocated cases.

The Intake team functions very much as a team. Communication, support and solidarity are very important. Problems are discussed and advice shared. They are very keen to get away from the idea of 'my social worker', and are therefore reluctant to let clients get too attached to any one person. This makes them more co-ordinating as a group, and prevents the formation of disproportionate caseloads. 'But it is sometimes hard, especially if there are problems you identify with, like unsupported mothers.'

Two workers on a duty day may see up to 30 or 40 people between them and deal with a range of problems. Here are 2 examples that arose on my visit:

1. A woman was separated from her alcoholic husband. As an unsupported mother she does part-time work and also gets social security. Now her husband has just returned, so all her benefits automatically go to him. This is an inadequate arrangement as he is unemployed and is very likely to spend it all on drink. Therefore the social workers are pushing the social security for a split payment, an 'irregular' request that involves a lot of telephone arranging. Meanwhile the mother has no money with which to buy food for the children. If the social security do not arrange this in time, money will have to be paid out from welfare. (There are 'Section 1 grants' to cover crises like this.)



2. A new client arrives. He is rather unshaven and shabbily dressed, wearing what seems to be a waistcoat inside-out, he is not old, probably about thirty. He had lost his bundle of clothes and wanted new ones and somewhere to stay. The social worker advises social security and the WRVS for clothing, and explains the residence rules - the social security will give him nothing unless he has an address. 'Money. I want money now.' 'Money we can't do, you'll have to go to the social security.' She gives him addresses of hostels, and a letter for the WRVS. He is anxious that she write a list of the clothing he wants, implying that he has done this before, but he turns out to be naive about social security. He has been ill and in hospital, and only recently came to this area. He is very persistent about money and

the social worker has to explain the situation several times, after which even she is getting slightly impatient. The strict rules have to be laid down - 'that's the way it is unfortunately'. She says he is not a typical dosser. He knows a few, but not all the ropes. She has very little to offer him in his position and the rules are almost Catch 22 - the hostel may refuse him if he has no money, yet he has to have this address before the social security will give him money. There is a great demand for proof of everything - identity, hardship, etc. This problem situation is not only confined to dossers, but to any single person, male or female, who has little money and nowhere to live. The system provides for families, but fails to recognise similar needs in individuals.

Other needs dealt with that day included making telephone applications for old people (which although classified as essential, may not be installed for 6 months or more), helping a woman who was making a DHSS appeal; rehousing a family facing eviction and helping a pensioner who had been sent a notice to quit by the GLC as part of a purge to frighten people who had arrears of any size. Her bill was only about £8, which the social worker would arrange for her to pay off gradually, but it had all come as a great shock to her.

The Longterm Team

These social workers deal with people who need regular care, visits and following-up. They work far more as individuals than as a team, and the personal relationships that develop with clients can involve very traumatic situations. They probably cope more frequently with recurring crises at a very personal level, such as mental illness or longterm marital problems. 'There are a fairly regular core of problem families - always about half a dozen on the bill at one time.' Each worker has their own caseload that they are responsible for visiting and supervising. Often the families go back for generations. It was suggested by one longterm worker that social work had perhaps created more problems for them, by making them so consistently dependent on assistance and welfare.

The work used to be divided into 3 categories - children, the elderly and physically handicapped, and mental health, but there has developed a national move towards generic social work, ie, having a mixed caseload. One worker in this department however was taken up mainly with children and court work, mostly due to the amount and pressure of this sort of work as children form a major problem group in this area. She got quite involved and very frustrated with this work, as 'you want to do more than you can'. The solutions and provisions are very inadequate. In court work, there is a lot of hanging around, and then the recommendations that may be made for a child, for instance, that he/she may be sent away to school, are impossible in practice because there are no places.

Flexibility was considered by those I spoke to as an essential attribute. A very organised person would be no good unless they could respond to spontaneous crises and changing schedules. 'You are very much on your own, to plan your own day.' There seemed to be a lot of autonomy, much more so than with the intake team, but on the other hand, while intake in theory begins and ends at set times, longterm may spill over to fill up extra hours. No one really grumbled to me however, and the mood in this office was very cheerful.



Contradictions

'There are contradictions for anyone with Left ideas who is working in social work.'

It soon becomes obvious that much of this work is patching over the holes in a deficient social system. Social work takes the edge off and shields the crumbling facade from public view. Problems like those seen by the Intake team are never-ending. There is always a great demand for social workers, but there could never be enough to cope with the potential needs, which like a flood can rise to fill the time of an infinite number of new workers.

Lack of resources is a constant block. In front of the altruistic and containing aims of social work, stand the workers, who find themselves offering help with their hands tied behind their backs. 'It's horrible sometimes.' They also act as a buffer between clients and other departments, with whom communication and co-operation leaves much to be desired. The housing department and social security are particular causes for long protracted wrangling, and any social worker has to become accustomed to dealing with unhelpful officials. (In many ways, the housing department is equally crippled by inadequate resources, but the rules add to this, making it only possible to rehouse a fraction of those needing it.)

One of the contradictions that radical social workers have been examining recently involves the family. Initially, social work - through the Welfare State - was supposed to strengthen the working class family and encourage changes in its standard of living. Today, the small family unit is under a lot of pressures, being a major personal and emotional focus, and breakdowns frequently occur between husband and wife, parents and children. The underlying ideology of

is made explicit in such things as the Children and Young Person's Act. In marital disputes, there are few solutions. A wife may be put in a hotel, but only with her children as she is then a 'homeless family', and has to commit herself to taking legal action.

Casework contains more inherent contradictions in its concern to maintain impossible situations, and radical workers have been criticising much of this approach. One social worker who was critical thought it was not helpful just to write abstract things about the dubious politics of social work, (eg, the question of putting kids into care), as this gives no practical advice. 'Meanwhile, the short term needs have got to be met.'

Being a Social Worker

Nowadays a lot more young people are moving in, often straight from university. In terms of job hierarchy, the lowest level is ancillary work. This involves activities like escorting children and visiting old people, and the work is mainly done by potential social workers hopefully gaining some experience. I joined the 2 intake ancillaries on a project to find out whether the tenants of a nearby set of flats for old people were interested in going on a coach outing later in the week. This also provided an excuse for the more important purpose of discovering who was there and whether they had any special needs that the social services could provide. It was part of their 'Outreach Project', oriented towards going out to people who would not otherwise come in. One old couple, aged 90 and 88, were marooned in their flat through not being able to walk. They had not been on an outing

4. It was alright at first because I could bring the baby in, but now it is not so easy.'

Why do people go into social work? 'Personal reasons - it's all according to the individual - maybe trying to find something a bit different and they are drawn to it.' Altruism as a major motive is rather out of date, as social work now moves into the realms of independently desirable jobs. People stay in the work for varying amounts of time. 'Some unqualified married women are content to stay a long time. But younger ones, and those who are qualified, start thinking about progressing and promotion. Some do just try it out, but some get fairly quickly drained by it.' A long term worker also commented, 'There is a very high turnover. People often can't cope with the pressure... you can be in this job too long. When I started in the Children's Department, there were 7 senior childcare officers of whom only one was male. Now men are far more at the top.'

Social work may be presumed to have its intrinsic rewards in the satisfaction of helping people with their problems. But it is more complicated than this. 'The more you do in it the more you realise the need to do it - doing a little bit - part of long term change in the system. You do need a certain amount of commitment, which may stem from political things. Under a lot of pressure, it can be hard to cope unless you have worked out what you think and why you do it.' One long term worker said it was a job like any other, which she enjoyed and from which she got job satisfaction.

Women and men alike face the difficulties and contradictions presented by doing social work. These are beginning to provoke them into



GUIDING CLIENTS THROUGH THE BUREAUCRATIC JUNGLE

since 1943! The ancillary workers may be used as general dogsbodies in some departments - it varies - but they do carry an often unrecognised responsibility. Next in line up the hierarchy are the assistant social workers, then the unqualified, then qualified and senior social workers. (You may only qualify by taking a 1 or 2 year course, but these and other aspects of social work training will be contained in an article in next month's issue.)

Part-time work is very hard to get. I talked to a girl who used to work full-time in the department, and who had managed to do some part-time work. 'It's the first time I'm really feeling the effects of being a woman. The local authorities have a quota to fill and they don't want part-time staff. I was working 2 days a week, from 11 to 4, which often meant starting before 11, working through lunch and going after

thinking more deeply about their position and the functions of their work. The combination of this with other forces, such as the increased awareness of women's liberation, has contributed to the emerging pockets of militancy. In the recent NALGO strike, several social services departments were very involved.

The job itself presents its own challenges both on a personal and a political level. Women, still undoubtedly making up the majority of the social work force, find themselves duplicating their role in the family in the outside world - caring and maintaining dependent people, smoothing over the daily disturbances. Those I met seemed competent and aware, most being conscious of a need to define and constantly assess their work. They may, in this sense, at present be a minority and therefore untypical, but they are an integral part of the changing face of social work.

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NEWS

RAPE

On the evening of March 19 1974, in Soledad, California, Inez Garcia was beaten and raped. She went on trial in August for first degree (premeditated) murder for shooting and killing one of her attackers. There was no rape charge. In October she was convicted of second degree (unpremeditated) murder and sentenced to five years imprisonment.

Inez is 30 years old. She is of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent. She has one child - an eleven-year old son. She cannot read or write. She has been living in Soledad for the past three years so she can be near her husband who is in Soledad prison. She has been working with the farmworkers as a volunteer: working in the field, taking care of workers' children and helping out wherever she was needed.

The women's movement mobilized around Inez Garcia's case. Rape, after armed robbery the second fastest increasing violent crime in the USA, threatens all women. "Her case is an example to everyone", said the Inez Garcia Defense Committee, "for until men stop attacking women, women must be free to defend themselves by whatever means necessary."

One of the women who went to the hearings described the court case in a letter to her parents: "I'm right now in Monterey's County Court House. The jury finally - after six weeks - went out today. We are awaiting their decision. The trial has been terrible. Inez is putting herself on the line completely for all women who have and will be raped. She says, 'Yes, I killed a man. I killed him because he raped me. I don't regret it. All I regret is that I didn't kill the other man' - her rifle jammed.

She's beautiful and shy. After extremely humiliating, disgusting repeated questioning from the district attorney, she made the above statement and walked away from the witness stand and out of the room. She is amazing. It is so sad the trial has been handled so poorly. Rape was never recognised by the prosecution. The court room has been filled with women every day since the defence began. We leave Berkeley 7-7.30 in the morning for the 2 1/2 hour drive down here."

The letter continues after the verdict came through a few days later:

"They found her guilty of second degree murder!! We couldn't believe it - we prayed for acquittal but really expected voluntary or involuntary manslaughter. She was immediately taken to jail although her sentencing isn't for another two weeks. So late Friday night we called every paper, radio station and women's group in the area to organise a demo at the jail. Finally about 75 women showed at the jail and a few men. We walked and chanted and yelled

in front of the jail for about an hour and then went to the judge's house. He's in his 70s - a total pig. He *hates* Inez. He was incredibly biased during the trial and we have the most amazing quotes from him. He does not believe she was raped, never listened to her and carries a gun and is very frightened of us women - remember a judge was shot in the East Bay at the Jackson Brothers trial. We yelled really loud outside his snob suburban home, finally police came and then a paddy wagon. They said they would declare it an unlawful assembly and we voted 3-1 to leave and come back rather than be arrested at that point. We're returning next Saturday and on the day of her sentencing we are organising an International Strike of Women.

Do you know the only juror to make a statement after Inez's trial was a black man. He said the result of the trial is going to make it even easier for rapists within the law and now women

will just have to give in and accept it. I cannot *believe* how amazingly unjust our society is."

After sentencing Inez the judge announced that the terms of detention might be changed. Inez is to be given a psychological examination to see if she is "mentally competent." Depending on the result she might go to a mental rather than a penal institution.

The verdict is to be appealed by Charles Garry, the defence attorney. Simone de Beauvoir sent a telegram of protest to the judge and a personal letter of support to Inez.

40 women demonstrated outside the American Embassy in London against the sentence on October 21st. There were five arrests on charges of obstruction, to be heard at Marlborough Street Magistrates Court. The next *Spare Rib* carries a report of the hearings.

INEZ GARCIA DEFENSE COMMITTEE
415 861-6500 / 653-9881
In Monterey, 408 999869

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Come to the trial. We need lots of visible support. There will be buses and cars going to Monterey. Call the committee for information on transportation.

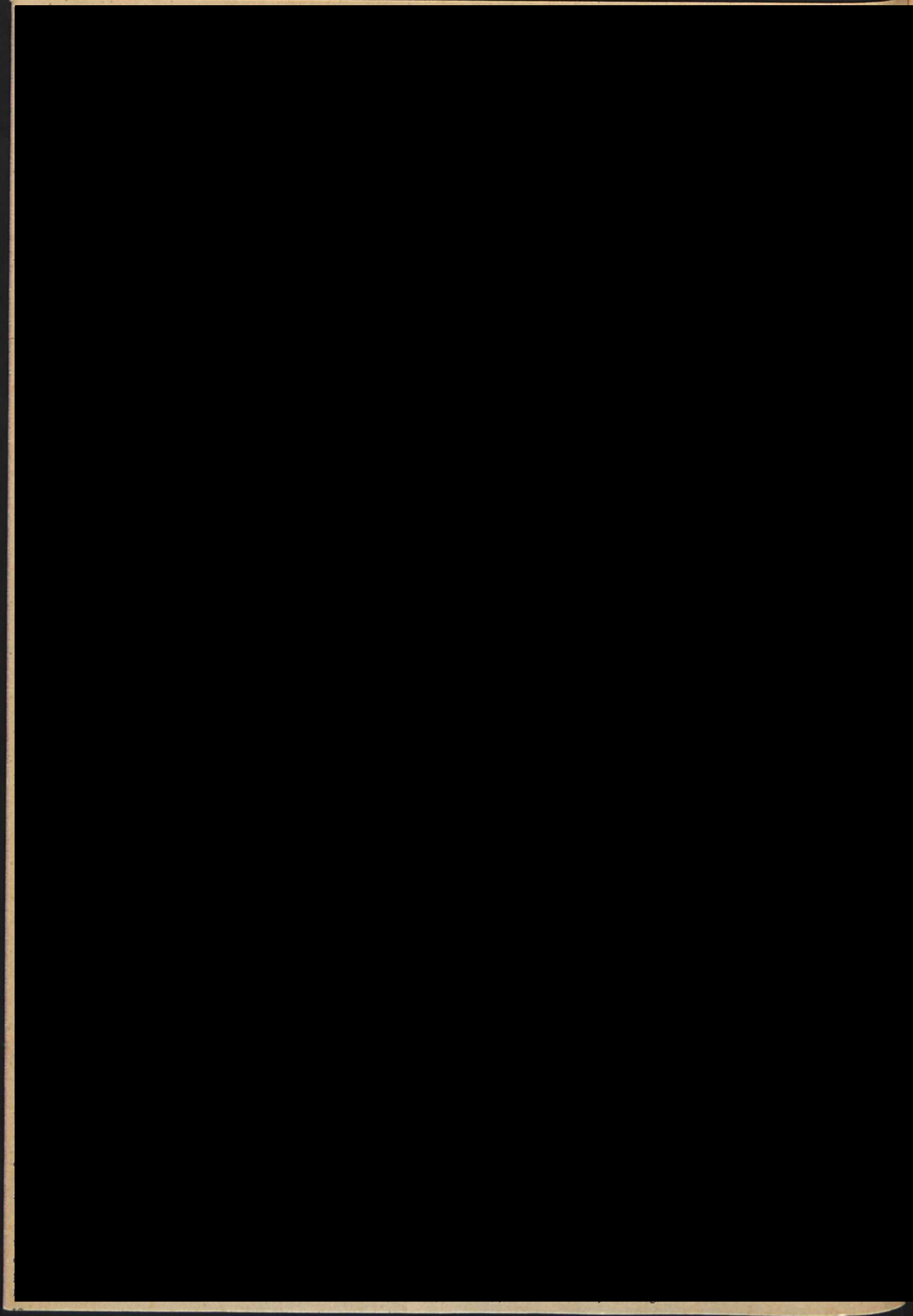
Spread the word. People are needed to hand out leaflets, staff tables, talk to organizations and groups.

The committee wishes to speak to women who have been attacked or raped as potential defense witnesses. Call the above numbers.

The Inez Garcia Defense Committee urgently needs your political support and financial help. Our expenses include \$80.00 per day to transport defense witnesses and supporters to the trial at the Monterey Courthouse, mounting office expenses, publicity costs, and continued educational activities. Please send money.

SEND MONEY!!!
FIGHT RAPE VIVA INEZ FIGHT RAPE

"I am not ashamed of what I have done. I was afraid and I had to defend myself. I would like other women to know about my case. I think they can identify with me. And if they had the same thing happen to them, they will know how I felt. Maybe it will stop more rapes."



SHEFFIELD:

WOMEN AND HEALTH WEEKEND IN OCTOBER

Midnight arrival at the Meat-whistle to comforting reality of cups of tea and friendly chats after cold one-way-Space-city-system greeting of Sheffield itself. Sleepy study of information folders gives us a glimpse of the care and thoughtfulness gone into its organisation and shows the basis for a practical, down-to-earth sharing of information approach that this weekend promises to take on.

Saturday morning after health-food breakfast, kids were dumped on Sheffield men who organised the creche... We're invited to listen to a documented talk on Basic Self-Help and Self-Examination given by Nancy McKeith (one of the conference organisers and a pioneer of self-help in this country).

The slides, which gave a fairly clear view of what to expect when you examine yourself, were described in turn with emphasis on the fact that no two cervixes are the same. Vaginal infections and their cures were discussed. We were taught how to recognise them and about symptoms, treatment, effects and prevention. We learnt of the differences in the size and shape and colour of the cervix relating to changes in a woman's cycle e.g. pregnancy, period, ovulation and infection. Someone gave a demonstration of Self-Examination and many women were both pleased and surprised at how simple and straightforward a procedure it is. Self-help has, universally, helped to dispel many myths for a lot of women, about the mysterious functioning of our bodies that most doctors and gynaecologists would have us believe. For many women that morning, it was the start of the demystifying process, as they purchased their first speculums.

Women from Leeds Health Group had managed to set up a Workers Educational Association Course in women's health in the local community. They advertised it as follows: "How well do you know your own body? Do you know how to deal with pre-menstrual tension, period pains, cystitis, or the possibility of a hysterectomy? Are you anxious about the effects of the Pill... and accidental pregnancy, or confused about who to trust when expecting a baby? Is your doctor sympathetic? Has she/he got time for your worries, do you dread the menopause? Have you

had a bad time in hospital, or do you just get depressed? We hope to cover all these subjects and many more with factual talks, film-shows, slides etc."

They found that initially it was a problem to persuade women to overcome all the usual barriers created by husbands, friends, about going to such a course and difficulties about arranging for the kids just getting out of the house. So they've set up a creche, and arrange to talk to women beforehand about coming to pick them up if necessary.

All the women at the conference seemed to be really involved in doing things and wanting to talk about the problems and the excitement of whatever they were involved in - self examination - teaching kids about health - questions about drugs which mothers had asked a playleader - linking up health groups and health workers. Women talked about their own experiences and feelings and how these related to what they were doing - it took my breath away; I felt part of the women's movement, and reaffirmed my politics as coming out of my own life and needs, in a way that happens too rarely both in the mixed political group I work in and in other women's conferences. People fighting each other from non-productive, little understood, theoretical positions but were talking through differences which came out of their experiences - which isn't to say that there weren't any theoretical differences.

I think the main weakness of the conference was the difficulty people had in articulating the theoretical assumptions that lay behind what were often posed as tactical differences. In the workshop on organising in the NHS suggestions were made for linking the work of women's health groups in, for example, pregnancy testing by pressurising the MOH, or having 'a nice sensible talk' with the doctors in the hospital, to raise questions of the authoritarian and sexist way they related to the nurses. Some people disagreed with these as tactics, but the way these suggestions were discussed didn't really bring out the differences between a basically reformist pressure group type of politics and the idea that people might struggle to change their situation. The same thing happened in the Education and Health workshop - a

couple of examples - various women who were teaching talked about how much you should reveal of your personal life to the students. One teacher said that her pupils had asked her if she'd slept with her husband before getting married. She said 'I don't ask you if you sleep with your boyfriends, so I don't think you should ask me questions like that'. Another teacher said that she told her students quite a lot about her life, and felt that she could ask them personal questions. It was suggested that perhaps this difference was related to the difference in their situations - the first being a fulltime class teacher with constant heavy demands being made on her, and the other teacher part-time. I think this is a real difference, but there was also a difference of politics, which we found it really hard to bring out.

Perhaps the closest we came to this was at the end of the discussion when someone pointed out that it was all very well people doing these isolated health courses in the school, but we had to generalise this experience - perhaps we should have a schoolstudents charter. Several people leapt in saying that the last thing we needed was yet another charter, and said that the way in which we felt that what we were doing in schools or WEA classes could be generalised was by being part of a revolutionary tendency. What that means to me - and other people in the workshop - is firstly that we teach consciously as socialists and feminists. And secondly that we see what we are doing as part of the work of a larger group of people who are politically active in their different areas. Thirdly, that as a teacher you don't just see your teaching as political but you take an active role in organising around the contradictions of schools, with students and other teachers.

Charters are no substitute for working out how we can use the things we are learning in self-examination and other health groups which give us the knowledge and confidence to demand something better than bourgeois medicine. Or to fight for a health service which is really concerned about our health and not just patching us up. Most people recognised that we weren't trying to set up a total alternative to the NHS - that the state should pay for our health service - but that we want control over it, so that we can get what we want out of it. This

doesn't mean that the work of women's health groups is secondary to the health workers' fights within the NHS. One of the reasons that medicine has been able to be used as it is, is because people haven't known what to demand, and so been passive in relation to doctors. Working on health in schools, WEA classes, and health groups, is a process that we have to go through to change our relationship to our bodies - to know what we need - what we can do for ourselves and where we need the help of people with particular technical skills, instruments and drugs. Extending this understanding may mean finding ways of introducing what we have learned into nurses' action groups or it may mean working on health with people whose basic link is around another issue, e.g. mothers of kids in a playgroup. I didn't get enough sense that people recognised health as being part of a more general fight. The link between the fuck-ups we experience as women over our health and the way in which capitalism tries to invade every other area of our life didn't seem to be made explicitly enough. Against that there was the sense that the women at the conference were doing what they needed to do and not using politics as some sort of intellectual ego-trip.

By some women from
East London



SELF-HELP SPECULUM DRAWN BY AMY FAWCETT

Injunction kit for battered wives

Battered wives can now write to Ruth Holt, a solicitor at Paddington Neighbourhood Law Centre, for a Do-It-Yourself Injunction Kit, which shows women how to apply in the divorce courts for a non-molestation order and expulsion of their husband from the matrimonial home.

"I wouldn't claim any originality for it but I think it breaks new ground in two directions", Ruth said. "Firstly, this is probably the most complicated legal process to have reached a kit. Secondly, battered wives are archetypal victims and this is a way they can get moving for themselves."

The main legal problem for battered wives is getting to court quickly enough. "If you don't get yourself to court within a couple of working days of the latest beating, the judge will say that it can't have been that important and won't give you an order", the kit states.

Many solicitors will not do in-

junction work because it is "frankly unprofitable": it means dropping everything the practice is doing in order to make an emergency application to the Law Society for civil legal aid, and payment, which comes at the end of the case, is anyway meagre. Nor are there any law centres outside London and Cardiff - although there are plans for Manchester and Bristol - so the kit will be essential for women who have no access to community law.

The documents which are needed for the first hearing come at the back of the kit, with margin notes in straightforward language: guidelines on official legal stationery can be intimidating. The documents comprise a petition for divorce or judicial separation; an affidavit, or sworn statement of the latest beating; an application for (1) a mandatory order that the husband leave the home, and (2) an injunction (i.e. restraint with threat of imprisonment) on beating between the two hearings; and a statement of arrange-

ments for children.

At this stage the woman must find a £16 petition fee, which is going to be very hard for many. The fee, which had been fixed at £12 for the last four years, goes straight to the court administration.

"Go to a doctor or casualty ward as soon as you are beaten up... ask the doctor or casualty officer to attend at court", the kit continues. It explains where to take the documents, and encourages the woman to find a McKenzie (lay) adviser. "A community worker or someone from a women's centre or a legal volunteer would be ideal."

There is a detailed account of "service", the process of getting the non-molestation order and papers for the second hearing to the husband. "You must not serve your own petition. Get a friend or adviser to do it and go with them if you can bear it."

Notes for lay advisers and battered wives hostels are also included. "Getting an injunction to expel the

husband from the matrimonial home is one good way to solve a family's accommodation problem when they are temporarily in a hostel." Ruth described the situation in one battered wives hostel in London where part of the paralysis in turnover of wives was due to the fact that the hostel consulted solicitors who purported to be doing injunctions but were delaying.

"If you delay it for three weeks, you won't get the husband turned out. You have to do everything to maximise the community usefulness of a battered wives centre", Ruth said.

The kit was read in first draft by friends and co-workers who had worked through other law centres on similar projects, e.g. an injunction kit for unlawful evictions, and is available from Ruth Holt, Paddington Neighbourhood Law Centre, 465 Harrow Road, London W.10, at 25p plus postage.

Ann Scott

Shaking their own destinies



Vi Gill

"I have never met one woman in my years on the shop floor who lives up to the myth that women go out to work for pin money," said Sheffield engineering shop steward Vi Gill. She was speaking at a one-day conference entitled "Women, the bill and beyond" organised in London in the middle of October by the Fawcett Society, which has been campaigning for women's rights since 1866 when the first suffrage committee was set up.

After an introductory speech by Sir William Armstrong, until recently head of the Home Civil Service, workshops formed on the legal status of women, women in public life, education, one-parent families, and employment and the trade unions.

Useful leaflets contained information on male/female membership of trade unions 1900-1972, concentration of membership, and the growth of white-collar unions since 1948. Total membership of ASTMS, APEX, DATA, NALGO, NUBE & CPSA - in which women predominate - has risen from just under 750,000 in 1964 to 1,360,000 in 1972.

Vi Gill described a wages fight at an engineering factory in Sheffield employing 100 women who in 1968 "had never thought that they could shape their own destinies," as an example of the lesson that "no section can remain isolated for long before the facts of life touch them." They were getting less than the

minimum national wage for women in engineering and had no trade union experience. At that time there were 3 women engineering shop stewards in Sheffield, now there are 60 and a women's advisory committee of the AUEW has been set up.

She described the weaknesses of the Equal Pay Act as it affects engineering. "There are many thousands of jobs which can't be compared to those of men, although they're no less skilled - or no less profitable." They are job-evaluating women's jobs and never getting to the nitty-gritty of the skill that goes into it. They should evaluate jobs, not people.

She referred to current discussions of protective legislation, and characterised the debate as 'a complete red herring. We must keep protective legislation, and ask what kind of facilities do exist for working women. At 6am you'll see the girls with the pushchairs in Sheffield, taking their children to unregistered childminders. The question of choice doesn't exist if you've got an employer with a three-shift system who'll show you the door if you won't work nights."

An exhibition of material relating to women's rights included anti-suffrage posters, a length of cloth on which militant suffragettes' signatures had been embroidered, and the sheet music of Ethel Smyth's *March of the Women* (which was used as theme music for the BBC *Shoulder to Shoulder* series).

Nursery Workers

The Nursery Staff Action Group, whose new address is St Peter's Toddler Club, St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London SW1, reports on a meeting held at the end of September:

Salary scales under the pay settlement. There was general agreement that while the new pay scales were some improvement, they were nowhere near what the Action Group has demanded as minimum. For example, we are told that an increase in starting pay from £891 amounts to 15%. But who wants to work 40 hours a week at a very demanding job for that kind of pay? In addition, the new pay scales contain disgusting age discrimination. The awards are only a token really, and on the whole an insult to the work done in nurseries.

Local tactics. Islington's nursery campaign against agency staff looks as though it might result in a 35 hour week for all nursery workers. The local authority is so worried about the action being taken to reduce staff-child ratios that they are looking for ways of attracting new staff. A 35 hour week plus time and a half for overtime would help a bit. Also, it seems as though they are more willing to hire part-timers and have offered one young mother a job and a place for her child in the day nursery. These are tactics that should be explored in other boroughs.

Exploitation. We discussed a report that a residential nursery in

Hammersmith requires its students to work 11½ hours per day, plus 2 night shifts for £8 per week. We must have more information and then act to expose this kind of shocking exploitation. We thought that a silent picket outside the nursery with some local publicity might be embarrassing enough to force the 'caring' management to make some changes. The students themselves are frightened to fight, and only if we join with them can we stop this sort of practice.

Working Women's Charter. One of the demands of the Working Women's Charter is for more and better nursery facilities. Obviously, working women who are mothers and the women who work in nurseries have much in common. There is increasing interest in providing nurseries in work places, for students, at public meetings, etc. Who's going to provide the child care in these nurseries? Nursery workers, of course. These nurseries should be run jointly by the workers and the people who use them. Working women can unite on these issues.

National Union of Students. Jenny Williams, a member of the NUS nursery campaign, told us of her interest in hearing students' views on the content and structure of the NNEB courses. Also, there may be good possibilities for NNEB students to work through NUS as well as the other unions for improving their situation■



Dear Editor,
As the Social Worker that Mrs Artiss spoke to in Westminster (Spare Rib News 28), I would like to point out that The City of Westminster Health Society, a body that are grant-aided by the Council, run a toddlers club in Churchill Gardens Estate, providing part time play facilities for 30 children. This same group will shortly be providing day care from 9.30 a.m. - 4 p.m. for ten children.

There are also two Council Day Nurseries, within easy walking distance of Churchill and Lillington Garden Estates, providing full day

care from 8am - 6pm for 110 children.

Other part-time play facilities available are three other toddlers clubs run by The City of Westminster Health Society, all grant-aided by the Council, one self-contained ILEA Nursery School and four ILEA nursery classes.

I am surprised that Spare Rib does not appear to check information before going to print.

Yours sincerely,
Kate Crawford,
Lewisham SE13.

Depressives Anonymous

The founding conference of Depressives Anonymous, attended by over 150 women and men, took place at the end of September at St. Mary-le-Bow Church, Cheapside, London. The meeting opened with a showing of Nemone Lethbridge's TV play *Baby Blues*, originally screened last winter, which drew 3000 letters from women who had experienced post-natal depression.

Jean Robinson described the inadequacies of NHS provision for depressives. "In some respects men have it even worse than women because they don't have a shoulder to cry on and have been taught not to cry on someone's shoulder anyway." She said that severe menopausal depression creates misery not only in the woman but in her husband and children.

Keith Middleton, who has been organising small group meetings in

the Birmingham area over the last six months, felt a need for a Charter of Rights for Mental Patients. He pointed out the discrimination in employment and life insurance against depressives who had been hospitalised.

There was some confusion at the meeting as to the orientation of the organisation. Although the aim is explicitly self-help there was some resentment from women who said "It's not just young women with young kids who get depressed."

More optimistically, however, three local groups in the London area did form at the meeting - in the East End, North and South. There are also plans for a Depressives Anonymous newsletter. You can contact the groups via Ann Gaines, 243 Dartmouth Road, London SE26, who stresses the need for more helpers, "particularly in the daytime - housewives like me."■

Feminist Distribution

A one day workshop was held in London at the end of September on distribution of women's movement literature. It was attended by about 30 women from various publications to discuss common problems of promotion and distribution of their literature (pamphlets, books, magazines and newsletters).

The workshop decided to explore new distribution of non-commercial women's publications in the following three areas: a) central distribution to bookshops, b) a central mail-order service, c) grass-roots distribution through non-conventional outlets by a national network of women.

After much discussion, Feminist Books in Leeds agreed to see if they could tackle items a) and b). Feminist Books would visit bookshops in the north of England and the midlands taking orders for books, magazines and pamphlets. (This is as large an area as they can rep).

Books, pamphlets and individual copies of magazines (though not subscriptions) would be bought by Feminist Books from individual publishers/groups at a discount. This discount would allow Feminist Books a 7% cut to cover postage, time, storage and expenses in send-

ing out their stock to bookshops and private individuals. Bookshops buy at a 25-33% trade discount, so publications must see whether they can afford a 33-40% discount (7% + trade discount).

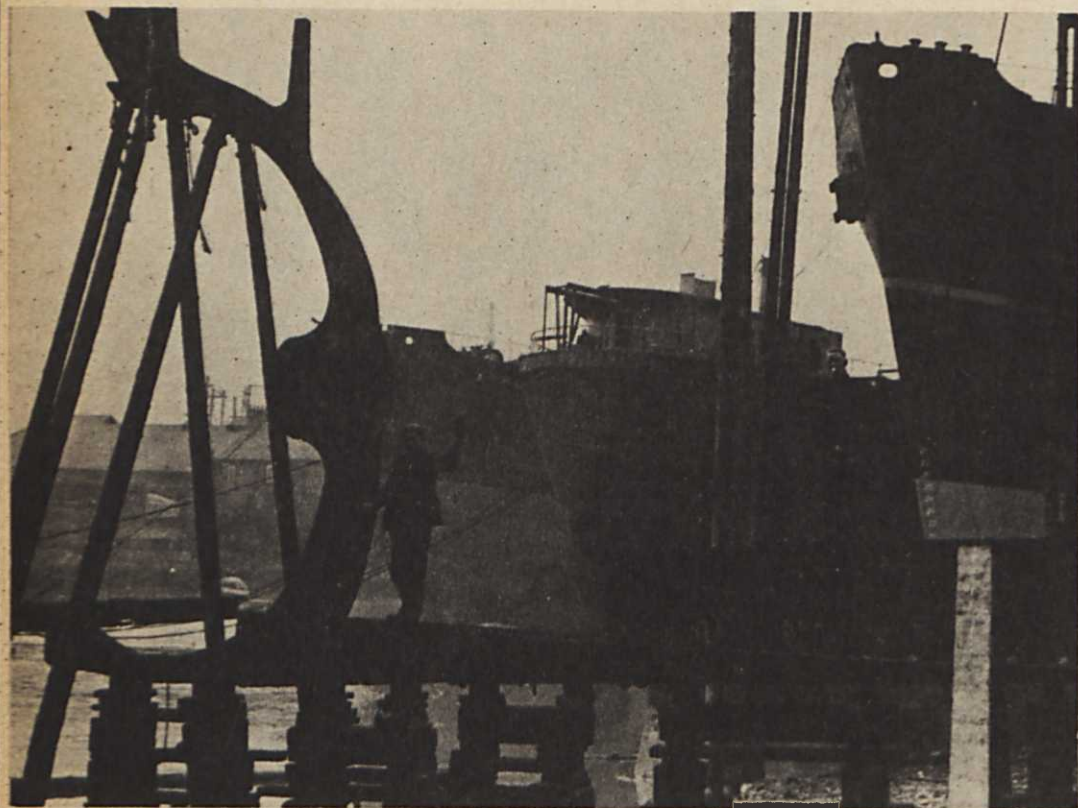
Magazine subscriptions would be treated differently. Feminist Books would visit bookshops and other outlets - e.g. women's groups - with individual copies of magazines. If an outlet wanted a subscription, FB would pass that order back to the publications to deal with, charging only for the postage incurred.

The Network of other regional centres is still in the planning stage. We'd like to hear from all women and/or groups who would be interested in doing this work in their town or area. We will provide a do-it-yourself distribution sheet for women who want to join the Network. Help is needed everywhere, though we already have some contacts in central London, Leeds, Bristol, Edinburgh and Swansea.

About twelve press and publication groups are so far involved. We now urgently need to hear from any others who want to join the Network. Could anyone interested or wanting further information contact Julia Vellacott, 4 Compton Terrace, London N1. 01-359 2831■

NATIONALISATION

Debt, Debate, and Industrial Democracy



Debates about nationalisation have attracted considerable attention over the last year. Here we look at the historical background to these debates and some of the issues they currently raise.

Since 1918 when the Labour Party first committed itself to socialism its constitution has included the well-known Clause 4 which sets the objective:

"to secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service."

In the inter-war period a debate was initiated within the Labour Party between two fundamentally opposed schools of thought regarding the role of nationalisation. One school saw nationalisation as a question of socialist principle along the lines of Clause 4. Not only should all industry and finance be eventually taken into public ownership but also wage earners of all grades and occupations should share in the control of nationalised industry. The opposing school, endorsed by the leadership of the Labour Party and the General Council of the TUC, saw nationalisation as a means of improving the economic performance of particular industries which were seen to be 'failing the nation'. These would be

run by managers on strict business lines, though under the ultimate control of a Minister.

In 1946-48 when the first nationalisation measures were implemented by a Labour Government it was the second school of thought that was dominant. The industries taken into public ownership during this period were coal (by then a virtually bankrupt industry), electricity and gas which were already largely in the hands of local authorities, and transport including undertakings which had been pre-war public corporations like London Transport.

Such industries not surprisingly fell into the category of 'basic industries ripe and over-ripe for public ownership' where public ownership was seen as a question of efficiency, and not of power. Nationalisation of these industries had even been recommended by conservative-minded government commissions on the grounds that private industry could best be served in this way. Nationalisation was delayed in the one case where it was opposed by the majority of Conservatives, that of iron and steel, an industry that was still sufficiently profitable for private interests to fight to retain it. It was therefore easy to reverse the decision when the

Tories came back to power in 1951.

Compensation paid to former owners of the nationalised industries was very generous. For example, in the case of coal, the owners did better out of nationalisation than they could conceivably have done had the industry remained under private ownership. In addition compensation entailed an enormous burden of debt for the nationalised industries themselves. That the public corporations should be operated to serve the interests of private business was further guaranteed by having their boards, staffed predominantly by men who had been or who still were closely associated with private finance and industry.

Both in its form and extent the nationalisation actually introduced conflicted with proposals that had been carried at the Labour Party's conference in 1944 to carry out "the transfer to public ownership of land, large-scale building, heavy industry, and all forms of banking, transport and fuel and power" and to provide for these industries to be "democratically controlled and operated in the national interest, with representation of the workers engaged therein and of consumers." (1)

Given the discrepancy between the way nationalisation was envisaged

by many people in the Labour Party and trade unions and the way it was implemented it is hardly surprising that considerable cynicism regarding nationalisation should have developed in the period since. There are other factors which have reinforced popular opposition to nationalisation. Even where public ownership could have been used as a tool of economic planning it has not. Transport is an example of this. Because in the 1950s part of the nationalised road transport fleet was sold back to the private sector and passenger road transport was not controlled by the state, any attempt to plan and co-ordinate inland transport was impossible with the result of increasing chaos on the roads and losses on the railways.

By the 1960s nationalised industries were under greater and greater pressure to deny the, albeit watery, principle of 'public service' and justify themselves on the same commercial grounds as private enterprise (2) despite the fact that the reason for nationalising these industries in the first place had been their non-viability as private undertakings. The one area, interestingly enough, where a commercial approach has not been taken is that of wages. Wages have been consistently lower in the public than in the private sector of industry and have also borne the brunt of wage freezes and incomes policies because of governments' ability to rigidly enforce these in the payment of state employees.

Given all these factors it is significant that the issue of nationalisation has again become a matter of intense political debate. On the one hand as specific private firms and industries become increasingly dependent on state economic support and non-viable as private industry, e.g. shipbuilding, ports, there is pressure for nationalisation along the same lines as previously took place. On the other hand within the Labour Party and trade unions there is renewed pressure for nationalisation of profitable industry and finance to carry out a transfer of power rather than merely a transfer of lame-ducks. These ideas have been largely attributed to Wedgwood Benn because of a key speech on the subject he made at the Labour Party Conference in 1973. In fact they represent a much wider recognition on the part of many people that private business has increasingly failed in the 1960s and 70s to carry out the productive investment for which its profits are socially justified with a resulting steady deterioration in the British economy. Yet it is also clear that Labour Party policy is still dominated by those who are unwilling for the state to take over profitable key sectors of industry or finance (3).

The debate about nationalisation now is in a context of economic crisis

more serious than the problems of post-war construction in the 1940s. There is thus a stronger economic basis as well as a moral basis to the arguments for nationalisation along socialist lines. For nationalisation is seen now, particularly by trade unionists, in the broader context of questioning the prerogative of private industry and finance to take the major decisions determining the economic development of the country. For example shop stewards in the aerospace industry (which involves both civil and military aircraft) have recently produced a written case for nationalisation there.

In response to this, at the other end of the political spectrum there is an organised defence of private industry, e.g. the recent publicity campaign financed by Aims of Industry characterising nationalisation as a white elephant. Individual large companies like ICI have sent letters to all their employees arguing the case against public ownership. With the recent return of another Labour Government these debates are likely to become increasingly important.

Footnotes

- (1) For further background see Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*.
- (2) See the 1961 White Paper on Nationalised Industries.
- (3) See the recent 1974 Labour Government White Paper *Regeneration of British Industry*.

Glossary

Strict Business Lines: control of all aspects of production by trained managers operating to maximise the profits of the enterprise.

Compensation: payment to former shareholders of the industries that were nationalised, in the form of interest-bearing loans to government. This gives a false impression because at no point did the previous owners lend money to the government, however the reason why they were better off is that the interest on the loan was higher than the dividend they would have got from their shares. The amount of payment was based on a subjective, and politically loaded, assessment of what the owners' shares were worth.

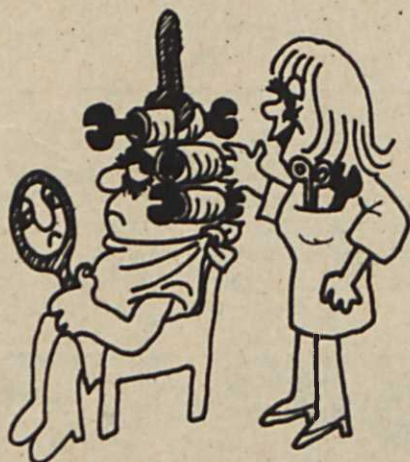
Debt: the interest that had to be paid to former owners on the assets the government gave them in compensation.

Losses on the railways: the decline in British Rail revenue relative to costs caused by the loss of freight and passenger traffic to road transport.

Lame duck: a term used to refer to any private firm which is non-viable without government support. It was adopted by Heath during the early phase of the last Conservative Government when their policies were opposed to state aid to industry. These policies were later reversed after the pressure brought to bear by the work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilding.

Jean Gardiner

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spare **Rib**

N.U.S. Women's Conference

The NUS Women's Campaign was born at the NUS Conference in 1972 when a motion was passed committing the Union to support the interests of women, and of women students in particular. But at the conference held at Leicester University on October 12th and attended by more than 400 women (and a few men), disillusionment seemed to have set in. The situation of women in higher and further education may take time to change, but one of the basic grievances was the attitude of the NUS itself. After the enthusiasm which greeted the 'Women in Society' motion in 1972, what has gone wrong?

About one-third of the 650,000 students in the NUS are women but the union is male-dominated. "The policy of the NUS decided by previous national conferences totally dismisses the WLM as petit-bourgeois", says a document distributed by seven out of the ten women elected to an Action Committee.

The Action Committee itself is now officially an Ad Hoc Advisory Group to the NUS Executive.

Union policy is "to support Women's Liberation while being suspicious of the WLM's middle class origins" - this from a predominantly middle-class (and elitist) sector of society. Women's groups in universities and colleges have tended to be linked with the WLM rather than with the union; this diffuses the potential strength of a women's campaign within the union, but

under the constitution of the NUS any group which it finances *must* be open to all students - a good point in itself but one which inhibits women who want their group to be autonomous. The small funds allowed by the NUS to the women's campaign seem to show that it is only a token in the union - a much larger budget is needed, as well as more real support from the NUS in giving some priority to the campaign.

The apparent lack of support from the NUS was only a side issue at the conference, at which delegates from most of the universities and colleges in the union had assembled to discuss the work of the women's campaign. The bureaucracy of the NUS seemed baffling to many of us, but a member of the NUS Executive assured us that it was there in order to protect democracy.

Separate discussion groups were held on lesbians, cuts in the education budget, married women's grants, courses in women's studies, nurseries, contraception and abortion facilities, the situation of men in the women's campaign and on the autonomy of women's groups. The results of these talks were discussed afterwards with everyone together.

Tess Gill, a solicitor and co-author of *Women's Rights: A Practical Guide*, spoke about Labour's proposed anti-discrimination legislation, which will ban some of sexism's most blatant forms - but pointed out that discrimination is hard to prove and complainants will receive no legal aid. One woman called the Bill "The most outstanding piece of tokenism ever handed out to women", and a man warned the conference against making the same mistake as gay people did in 1967 when the Sexual Offences Act

was accepted as "at least a good start"; there has never been any follow up. He advised women to refuse this bill now and demanded more positive legislation.

"We demand that the NUS pay £1,000 to every lesbian who comes out, backdated to when she came out, threshold payments to be agreed on", cried Joan, a volatile lesbian - amid much laughter, this was unanimously agreed on. But the situation is really not amusing: Joan said she found lesbianism more accepted by working class people in her home town than among straight students, who show little tolerance for people with a different sexuality "in the great university pick-up grounds". She said the NUS have accepted material for lesbian posters, for example, but the posters have never appeared.

The discussion group on contraception and abortion revealed that colleges and universities often have no adequate facilities: although some were highly praised, doctors in student health centres tended to be paternalistic, giving long lectures on morality and offering no alternatives to the pill in spite of the symptoms it can produce in women. Contraceptive facilities in some colleges consisted of a Durex machine in the men's lavatory: the Principal of one college refused to instal even one of these because it would encourage immorality! Students on campus who had to travel miles to the nearest family planning clinic felt that even a monthly clinic at their college would take the strain of many extra students off the town clinic, which

could then devote all its time to women in the town.

Another issue of interest to others as well as to students was nurseries: colleges and other women's groups could pool information and work together. The possibilities of a Baby Demo were discussed, in which all student parents would take their children and disrupt lectures at their university or college on a certain day. Many women - and some men - are prevented from continuing their education because they have children, just as working women are forced into unemployment or badly-paid and unsuitable work because other employers will not provide creches. The quality of nurseries was stressed: they must not be understaffed and ill-equipped baby-dumping grounds. And two speakers (male and female) from the National Union of School Students described the aggression bred by the tough male image at school.

From these and other discussion groups arose a number of amendments to be added to the Women's Campaign motion to be discussed at the National NUS Conference at the end of November.

Some women present felt that students could do more to show their solidarity with other women, but that an NUS conference had little relevance to anyone except students. However, fighting for such needs as better contraceptive and nursery facilities, less sexist school literature, and anti-SPUC work, could finally benefit women everywhere.

What emerged most strongly from the conference was that any women's campaign within the NUS has to struggle first of all against the sexism of the union itself ■

Janet Wright

German Lesbians in Court Case

A group of lesbians in Germany demonstrated in an Itzehoe courtroom last month against the press view of lesbianism. About twenty women from groups in Frankfurt and Berlin disrupted the murder trial in which two lesbians are accused of murdering the husband of one of the women.

The German popular press have used the trial as an excuse to report details of the women's relationship, and, as the pamphlet handed out in

the courtroom said, "The trial is used as a pretext to sit in judgment over lesbian love."

The trial has been sensationalised and the court has even decided not to exclude the public during description of intimate details of the women's relationship. The exclusion of the press and public would be

usual if it were a trial involving a heterosexual relationship.

The demonstrators sat in the public gallery, and when the judge said to one of the accused women, "So then you got to know a certain Susie, with whom you 'communicated' in this way," they stood up on their benches, showing T-shirts which spel-

led out "Against the gutter press. For lesbian love."

At this point the Judge, Mr Justice Selbmann left the court.

The women were tried once during the summer (the alleged murder took place last October) but after a six-day trial, one of the jurors was taken ill and no verdict was reached.



Against smutty press - for lesbian love

SEX DISCRIMINATION and SOCIAL SECURITY

The one day school in London at the end of October on Sex Discrimination and Social Security was organised by women in the Claimants movement who are fighting the continuous discrimination of the DHSS official policy, and SS officials in local offices. We felt that Roy Jenkins' Sex Discrimination paper is just a concession to enable more women to be absorbed into the economic system. The paper totally ignores Social Security and social services.

The one day school was attended by women and men who have had personal experience of the oppression of the SS, and most of the 80, people there were claimants, from claimants unions, women's centres and women's aid centres. Some weeks before the school women from London CUs gave Roy Jenkins (and Barbara Castle before that) the same humiliating treatment many of us claimants have received from the SS snoopers - we dressed up as sex snoopers and prowled around their affluent houses, taking notes and photographs, and questioning children, neighbours and tradesmen.

On Saturday the day was mainly taken up by workshops which

enabled everyone to contribute, with a group session at the end where we reported back from the workshops, and planned further action. There was a creche organised by Brixton Men's collective. The most subscribed workshops were on cohabitation, single parents, and women's aid/housing.

We examined all aspects of the cohabitation rule, including ways of fighting the SS (if you suspect you are being investigated for cohabitation, get in touch with your local Claimants Union, but above all don't be intimidated by the SS - they have no rights to pry into your lives). The basic assumption of the SS is that a woman should be dependant upon a man, and live within the nuclear family. Claimants Unions have always demanded the total abolition of the cohabitation ruling - 'Where a husband and wife are members of the same household their requirements shall be aggregated and shall be treated as the husband's, and similarly unless there are exceptional circumstances, as regards two persons cohabiting as man and wife', according to the 1966 Social Security Act (the SS's secret AD codes contradict the published policy).

We refuse to allow our requirements to be treated as those of a man. So we want every person who 'works' in the household to be given a state allowance. This allowance should be adequate, and paid for home and child care, paid regardless of sex or marital status. We also want more community provision for child care.

The single parents workshop continued in 2 sessions throughout the day. There was much exchanging of information, and many aspects were covered - students, male single parents, voluntary unemployment, further education, kids education, social and welfare services, maintenance, Finer report etc. There are 620,000 single parents, many of whom rely on SS, and are the lowest income group of claimants. More women are taking action over lousy marriages, and for most of us the only alternative is the equally lousy SS, and a society that is ignorant and hostile to our needs.

We accept some of the possible piecemeal implementations of the Finer report, and we considered the possible production of an alternative report, tying together the demands and necessities that came out of the workshop.

Lots of accurate and practical exchanges of information came out of the Womens Aid workshop. We felt unanimously that direct action like squatting was the only way to start a centre, and not to be reliant on the whims of the local authority. As all women in Womens Aid Centres claimed SS, it was important to back each other up, and claim at the SS offices in groups. There were reported instances of SS clerks notifying husbands of the wife's address, only basic information should be given to the SS, i.e. that you are unsupported, and need money for yourself and your kids.

The legal workshop centred around the recent challenge in the High Court by order of mandamus (we did it ourselves, it is quite easy) over the head of the household rule, i.e. that the man automatically claims on behalf of his 'dependants', even for personal items like grants for clothes etc. We hope that more women will challenge this assumption. Lots of legal advice was at hand, on housing, social services, do-it-yourself divorce and injunctions. We talked about the legal aspects of appeals tribunals, secret codes, and investigation of complaints.

Unemployment and low paid jobs examined the inherent sexism of the National Insurance schemes, and methods of Employment Offices. Clerical jobs are the only ones available, many part time and most low paid. Women are rarely offered government retraining schemes, and the rate of a married woman's dole is lower than that of a man, even if she has paid full stamps. The act won't really affect or change 'womens work'. The bread winner/dependant role is not questioned, and women will be bought off, and absorbed into the wage labour system.

In the summing up session we agreed on many basic demands. We are fed up of living on the bread line, especially as Christmas is approaching, and so we want all claimants including pensioners to apply for a £30 Christmas bonus, and a kids bonus. If this is refused we shall appeal. The clerical cost of preparing a simple appeal is £30, not to mention the £20 paid to the so-called independent members of the tribunal. We want built-in threshold agreement in our weekly money, our last rise was swallowed up by rising food prices months before it was paid. We want to keep our family allowance, and not to have to pay it back to the SS. We want our proposals for the abolition of cohabitation implemented, and an adequate allowance paid for home and child care. Above all we want to get together to fight the continuous harassment and discrimination of the SS, and to have control over our own lives.

Brixton Women's Centre

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY in USA

I was only trying to prove that all men aren't breadwinners and - a loaf of bread costs a woman as much as it does a man.

These words were said by Lorena Weeks, a worker for Southern Bell Telephone Company in 1970, in reply to criticisms from fellow workers (male and female) for having applied for a higher paid job in the Bell system, previously held only by men. Hers was a lonely struggle against a company that has been described as the 'single largest oppressor of women in the US', also, one might add, minority men also.

Two years later these discriminatory hiring and promotion practices came under extensive federal and public scrutiny during the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission hearings about American Telephone and Telegraph Company (ATT) when testimony like Lorena Weeks' was heard from employees who risked their jobs in the process. The hearings resulted in a consent agreement between AT&T and the EEOC - committing AT&T to an Affirmative Action Program. This is supposed to eventually bring the percentage of minorities and women up to the percentage of them in the population in that area, and to make sure employees can obtain promotions within the company by way of an 'upgrade and transfer program'. The program is subject to review annually by both the Office of Federal Contract Compliance and the EEOC.

The EEOC itself had been set up in 1964. Its existence in the US should be seen in the context of more than a decade of general civil rights struggles by blacks (the Civil Rights Act had been passed in 1964), increased militancy of women, and also the existence of the Equal Pay Act (1963). It is a federal body, with headquarters in Washington, and local city and state offices in every state, where particular grievances can be filed. It covers all employers and industry in the US and its decisions are binding, although any firm

can take a decision against it through the appeal system in the courts.

The EEOC covers charges of discrimination in both hiring and promotion, and, of course, discrimination in this sense applies both to men and women and to minority groups. It has powers to order back pay to be made to people blocked from promotion, and to put them in jobs previously denied them by reason of sex or race.

The people who work for EEOC are (often) lawyers, with quite a large proportion of women and blacks - a trend in all federal bodies in the last ten years. Positive discrimination is applied in their own hiring - the Department concerned with AT&T in the New York EEOC office is headed by a black woman. Under the terms of its existence the Commission is allowed to put out informational literature about its powers etc., but it is not allowed to publicise cases won by individuals against employers. Its existence is not that widely known about, partly because of not advertising themselves widely and also because there already exist several complaint procedures for workers, e.g. their own unions, and the National Labor Relations Board.

When you file a complaint with the EEOC in fact, they send it through the NLRB first, then a State body if it is rejected at the first, and then finally will deal with the matter at a federal level itself, if it is rejected at the second. There is a large backlog of cases, with people filing against AT&T, for instance, waiting at least two years for a result. So, despite news that the number of personnel will be increased soon, filing with the EEOC means long waits.

However, with most of the unions being bureaucratic, slow about women's and minorities' rights to say the least, and often just hopelessly corrupt, the existence of the EEOC is very important. Activist groups working in and around workplaces in the US, while understanding the limitations of such a

body, have encouraged people to file with it, and take part in hearings against particular employers. In the case of AT&T the main union representing telephone workers, the Communications Workers of America (CWA), was shown to be particularly reactionary. From the start it opposed the setting up of an affirmative action program by the EEOC, because they said it interfered with their bargaining rights! Although women form the majority of their membership, the CWA itself had never taken the initiative about upgrading and transfers or discriminatory hiring. There is an instance of another union in Boston taking up the case of women threatened with lay-off who got transfers but were not allowed to take their seniority with them.

The CWA, under the general terms of its contract with the company, is not able to take cases to arbitration of workers who have been with the company less than one year. When 16 year old Hannah Storch was fired from a New York office of AT&T in February 1973 after 11 months service (a lot of the newly-hired women had been fired before their first year was up), the union went through the motions of grieving her case up to the point of arbitration and then said there was nothing they could do. Meanwhile, some workers in her building had helped her file with the EEOC, and found out that she needed affidavits from fellow workers. As she had been fired for 'unsuitability for the job' affidavits were needed testifying to her competence, also spelling out the blatant sexist remarks from her supervisors, who believed (they said it aloud to other workers) that women shouldn't be in craft jobs. Hannah had been the first woman in an office of 80 male 'craft' - a job roughly equivalent to an engineer at the Post Office here - a technical job involving basic electronics working on inside telephone equipment. This work was much better paid than operators or clerical

workers, and had previously been done almost entirely by white men.

In this case, when the men as a whole were still threatened and prejudiced about women coming into 'their' jobs, and where no solid show of support had been made for Hannah (the same building regularly walked out for disciplinary action taken against male workers), it was important to have people inside who kept in touch with the people who had known Hannah and were willing to write the affidavits. It took a long time to collect them, and in the meantime the group working on the case put together a fact sheet about what happened, and also a couple of leaflets. One of these called for a walk-out, and it fell flat. Because of this, after considering putting a petition with the fact-sheet, the group decided just to circulate it to the people who had known Hannah and were likely to write affidavits. During a period of 18 months a couple more leaflets were put out, one to do with another case of a woman fired, mentioning Hannah, and a second, when Hannah eventually won the case. The affidavits, during the first period, had to be notarised (i.e. signed by an additional lay witness) and then sent to the EEOC office. Pressure was kept up on the EEOC office as to the progress of the case, though luckily there was a department especially set up to deal with AT&T cases - on the grounds of its appalling record - so there was a fair amount of interest in Hannah's case. The affidavits themselves were startling and conclusive about the discrimination she suffered, and these plus the collectively compiled fact sheet and the support of the group in the building helped win her case. By the time the final details of back pay, and/or job reinstatement are settled, the whole case will have taken 2 years.

It is obviously important that activists help people file, publicise both the workings of the EEOC and

accounts of cases won. In the group connected to Hannah's case there was disagreement about how much time to spend getting involved with this process and how much to work within the unions. The situation with operators (most of whom are black women) in the phone company is that they have much more constant and pernicious forms of discrimination and harassment handed out to them every day compared to the craft workers. They are treated like children (for instance they have to put up their hands to go to the lavatory, they cannot stand up for any reason without permission) and any upgrade application to the better positions or jobs is made conditional on their general work and attendance records. Specific complaints should be, and have been, filed with the EEOC by operators, but it is arguable that a more effective tactic might be a suit on health and safety grounds directly against the company, challenging the way they try to control their workers. The vicious Absence and Lateness Program, for instance, means that no allowances are made for women with young children, or who are just plain tired (there are no sick days at Bell).

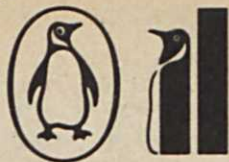
Redundancies constitute a further issue. In another Bell subsidiary, Western Electric, recent lay-offs of everyone who has worked less than four years have left almost the entire work force in that company white and male. The EEOC has guidelines about positive discrimination in lay-off situations, but they are apparently not binding as yet. However, the Commission is looking into this whole question currently. Here again, the unions most of the time take a reactionary role, and to get at the roots of the power which perpetuates this kind of white male dominance demands creative thinking and constant hard work that will go beyond the scope of the EEOC or union channels.

Workers themselves with support from outside the workplaces will have to continuously challenge the complacency of firms that claim they have made all the necessary changes. Moreover although real victories have been won, and cases taken through such bodies help change attitudes, there have also been problems of a backlash against both women and minorities. It will be important to have an EEOC in England. But we must remember to be aware of its limits, and that watch-dogs have to be watched over. Any government body like this deals only with the consequences of discrimination - not with its causes.

Further Information

EEOC, 1800 G Street N.W., Washington DC, 20506. In this country, contact Equal Pay and Opportunity Campaign, 20 Canonbury Square, London N1.

Paula Oran



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Trains, buses, escalators, and a Baby

I volunteered to write this article when my baby was eight weeks old and I was feeling ecstatic that I'd managed to get myself, her, a carrycot, transporter wheels, and disposable nappies from SW20 by train and tube, into the Spare Rib office. I'd gritted my teeth and left years of conditioning at home to face having to breastfeed in a place that wasn't absolutely private. The elation has long since worn off but the problems remain all too vivid. What I'd visualised as a chatty, slightly humorous article has turned into a survival guide.

Buses

If your baby is used to a carry cot-pram arrangement or a pushchair, life is going to be difficult for the two of you. London Transport could scarcely have designed a bus less accommodating for mothers and wheeled vehicles than the currently promoted model which has two aisle entry for automatic ticket dispensing machines. If you think that mothers, prams and bus transport are by definition incompatible, you are wrong. The Swiss buses have double doors, side entry and planned provision for parents with wheeled vehicles. In the meantime if you've got a transporter-carry cot and thick skin you can disassemble the contraception, hand the bottom half to some likely looking person in the queue and then manoeuvre down the aisle with the baby to pay the fare. When you're getting out be sure to give a good shout to the driver not to start until you, baby and equipment have completely disembarked. Whatever you do, be sure that it's the helpful stranger who takes the equipment and you who takes the baby. You'd hate to find that you and the pram had safely managed to embark but that the bus driver had decided that there wasn't room for anymore leaving the good Samaritan and your baby back at the stop. It's odd that it's the mother who feels diffident and embarrassed about asking for this kind of help rather than the oafs in the

queue who can stand indifferently by while the mother struggles with child, equipment and shopping. I've never had anyone refuse to help me when I've asked them directly but in the dozen or so bus trips I've made with my baby I've only once had someone spontaneously offer to help and that was a woman. Just remember if you get any flack, you pay taxes and it's your transport system too.

The Underground

It is hard to believe that London Transport, as part of its modernization programme, is planning to phase out its lift schemes at those stations where they still remain in operation. Lifts make it possible for mothers with small babies and prams and pushchairs to use London's best and fastest method of transport on an equal footing with others. Fortunately London Transport is as inefficient with its phasing out programmes as it is with everything else it undertakes and it's worth checking if there are lifts or escalators and the stops you are likely to want. An invaluable little booklet is published by the Central Council for the Disabled which lists not only the above information but says exactly how many stairs are involved at each stop and in making each transfer. (available for 23 pence from the Central Council for the Disabled, 34 Eccleston Square, London S.W.1.).

If the worst comes to the worst and you decide to brave a particularly complicated change with lots of steps and escalators then it's worth considering the relative merits of the official London Transport method of travelling with baby and the one that everyone seems to use. I really don't know who or in what epoch London Transport decided that "for safety sake all prams and pushchairs should be folded," but I know that that method is dangerous. I used to use the tubes only when my husband was along to carry the transporter wheels for the carry cot and I dutifully disassembled the whole contraption at each escalator. The problem is that carrying a three or four month old baby in a carry cot is a heavy bulky business and I've come close to giving up the whole enterprise when twice carry cot and baby

were nearly bumped from my hands by fellow passengers hurrying past on the escalators. I had just about decided that the tubes were more than I could cope with when I saw a mother with twin boys in a buggy style pushchair push them right on the escalator one step ahead of her. They were securely strapped in and seemed to be in less danger than my own carefully cosseted child who was following the London Transport regulations to the letter. I tried it with both a pram and a pushchair... a dry run at first with empty vehicles just in case it wasn't as easy as the twins mother made it look... I found the new method a great improvement in all respects. It's time that London Transport actually pointed out the hidden dangers in the alternative method; or changed its regulations and reconsidered its plans to do away with lifts.

British Rail

For those of you who come into London by train from the suburbs there are a few tips that can make life a lot easier if you plan to bring baby. If you have a large bulky pram you can travel in the guard's carriage that has large double opening doors without having to disassemble your baby's transport. Unfortunately, and this seems relatively simple to alter, there doesn't seem to be any easy way to predict where in the arrangement of carriages the guard's segment is going to be. Be prepared to run for it and don't be demure about shouting for them to hold things up until you are installed safely. Trains won't pull out until all of the doors to the carriages are shut so be sure that you first settle yourself and baby safely and THEN shut the door. Otherwise you can find yourself trying to install your equipment and your baby as the train lurches forward. I've spent a fair amount of time cursing British Rail for making its doors to the regular carriage compartments just a quarter of an inch too small for me to pass my carry cot through but have since discovered that my neighbour's model just makes it, so I've decided to curse the Marmet company instead. Either way, couldn't there be a little coordination in these matters? One final word about British



libraries, department stores

Rail. Our local shop has a ramp leading up to the trains going to Waterloo and life couldn't be simpler but coming back the other side of the station has two flights of stairs. How much pleasant-er life would be if ramps were the norm and they will be if parents begin to demand them.

No Prams

Once you've managed to get there . . . wherever there may be . . . the problem becomes one of how to carry out the rudiments of baby feeding and baby hygiene. Perhaps the one cardinal rule of travelling with baby is to plan ahead and use the telephone. Ring the places you want to visit and check to see if first they will allow children and prams at all. I was amazed to find out not only how many places make no provisions for babies but also are actively hostile to them. Our local borough has a 'no prams and pushchairs in the library' rule which fortunately is largely ignored by the individual librarians in the face of the wave of baby snatching incidents. When I rang round to various museums and tourist sights their reaction to bringing baby was hardly encouraging. The Tower of London actively discouraged me from bringing Ruth and informed me that I couldn't use a pushchair and there were no places to feed or change a baby. Museums differ widely in their policies about babies. It can save a day to remember the baby sling if a museum won't let you take your pushchair round but be careful, some museums are beginning to be suspicious of baby slings too because of the bomb scares.

Public Conveniences

In almost every respect I find England and particularly London infinitely more civilized and pleasant to live in than my native USA but oh do I miss the Public Convenience Acts that are law in all of the fifty states. All buildings that are open to the public are required to provide drinking fountains and toilets in proportion to the number of people using the building. Here a toilet is considered a luxury affair and as usual it's the pregnant women or women and men with children that find life particularly difficult. I was quite horrified to find out that our local libraries, including the

large borough reference library have no toilets available for patrons. When I asked the librarian what she suggested I do with my three year old who was by that time standing nervously on one foot and then the other, she waved vaguely in one direction and said "Oh, we always tell everyone to use the toilets at Elys Department Store". I wonder what Elys thinks about this policy of providing public toilets for the users of the library? I was recounting this story to a local social worker who managed to top mine by pointing out that the local social security offices refuse to allow claimants to use the staff toilets even though it often means a mother with toddler must forfeit their place in the queue in order to hike up the road to use the toilets at the British Rail Station. Neither of these situations would be legal in the States and I find it difficult to understand why the British public put up with them as a matter of course.

Shops like Marks and Spencers and C&A not only do not have toilets, but often the baby goods are on the first floor. Big department stores do provide comfortable cubicles for breastfeeding, bottlewarmers and changing tables, but always these facilities are only available for women. God help the man who wants to change a baby's nappy outside his own home.

Given the dearth of loos one encounters in both public and private places here it is a good idea to travel with a plastic bag containing damp tissues for washing either end of the baby should the occasion arise . . . and it will. You may often find that there is no place to dispose of a wet or dirty nappy so a few spare plastic bags with fasteners are useful for putting soiled nappies.

Breast feeding

Nappy changes are relatively simple compared to the problems of finding a relatively pleasant and private place to feed your baby particularly if he or she is breastfed. Unfortunately there is still a residue of maiden aunties in the population who look away in disgust and tut tut under their breath at what is after all one of life's pleasanter sights. I was once caught out with my baby and the only

place that seemed at all possible was a rather nasty public toilet with no chairs and hard, hard stone floor. There didn't seem to be much choice, the baby was roaring with hunger so I sat down on the floor and started to feed her. Sure enough two Wimbledon old age pensioners came in and said "Ladies take care of that sort of thing at home, dear". The next woman who came in gave me a funny look and I was stealing myself for another attack when she said in a lovely concerned voice . . . "Oh, dearie, you mustn't sit on that cold tile floor, you'll get piles you know". I found that rather charming. Those were my baby Ruthie's early days and I was rather shy about baring my breasts in public but now I've become a militant breastfeeder and I would choose the public library which was in the vicinity. But more important for the social context of breastfeeding, raising the healthiest infants possible is the concern of the whole community and breastfeeding is an activity that ought to get public endorsement. If you can manage it, breastfeed any place or time your baby feels hungry and soon people will get used to seeing this normal and pleasant human activity as a part of everyday life. If you still feel shy then don't hesitate to make use of the feeding rooms that many department stores provide. You don't have to buy anything at Harrods or John Lewis' or Selfridges to make use of their facilities.

All of us, parents and non-parents alike have something at stake in seeing that parents and children are not shut out of our cities. Parents can stand up for their rights and their children's rights by expecting and requesting help with managing the hazards of public life with their kids. Non parents can help by supporting them and by lending a willing hand. We have a chance to support and encourage shops that do make an effort to provide services to mothers with children, like Sainsburys with their creche facilities and Tesco's with their baby slings. We have to let shopkeepers and manufacturers know that there is a demand for these services and that indeed any just society would take them for granted.

Constance Whippman

you can get down again, she'll have to come back for us ..



Williams.

SHORTLIST

compiled by Ann Scott
Feel free to send any information
to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9
Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS

events

Week of lunchtime films/discussion on women at the London College of Printing, Elephant and Castle, Nov. 18-22, 12.30-2pm. Free.

Women in China

Day school organised by Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, Sunday November 24 starting 1pm, to be held at 152 Camden High Street, London NW1. Write for details, with 30p PO and SAE to 24 Warren Street, London W1 or telephone SACU, 387 0074.

Legal and Financial Independence for Women: the fifth demand

There will be a one day conference to discuss this and plan campaigns on November 30 at North London Poly, Holloway Road, London N7 (Holloway Road tube), 25p entrance. For information contact Leo Wilson, 21 Castle Street, High Wycombe. Tel: 671 2779.

NUS Scottish Women's Conference

Homosexuality is illegal in Scotland, so it's illegal to advertise Gay Society meetings. This and other topics will be raised at a meeting on November 23 to discuss a forthcoming conference. Contact 12 Dublin Street, Edinburgh.

Red Ladder Benefit

Red Ladder Theatre will be making a rare public appearance with their play *A Woman's Work is Never Done* (discussed by Micheline Wandor in this issue of *Spare Rib*) at a benefit for the group on Monday December 2 at St Pancras Town Hall, 7.30-12 midnight.

The programme (yet to be finalised) will include music, cabaret and circus acts. All proceeds will go to Red Ladder Survival Fund. See *Time Out* at the end of November for details.

Bristol WACC

Another reminder: Bristol WACC have been invited by Harlech TV to make a programme for their Friday night *Free Time* series. It's likely to go out on December 6. Details from the Women's Centre, 11 Waverley Road, Bristol 6. Tel: 38120.

Nottingham Conference on Abortion and Contraception

Projected conference for January. Contact Rose Knight, 3 Dunlop Avenue, Lenton, Nottinghamshire.

Nottingham Conference on Women and Education

Planned for the New Year, topics include sexism in school courses and books, sex-role stereotyping and discrimination against women teachers. The organisers would like papers, and experience of others in organising similar conferences. Contact Tina Pamplin, 18 Corporation Oaks, Nottingham.

The Politics of the Women's Movement

The Women's Studies Programme at the Polytechnic of Central London introduces a new course in January on

the Politics of the Women's Movement. Topics covered will include feminist politics, the value of legislative reforms, the relation between the women's movement and socialism, the economic position of women, sexual politics, problems of structure in the women's movement and comparison with other countries. Lectures will be given by speakers from different disciplines and diverse political positions.

Contact Extra Mural Centre, PCL, 104-108 Bolsover Street, London W1 tel: 636 4991 x. 36/33.

Mental Health - Crisis or Stagnation

Day seminar organised by Socialist Medical Association, 23 March 75 at The Assembly Hall, Unity House, Euston Road, London NW1, 10-5.30. "The purpose of the seminar is to look at the services we provide for all who are mentally ill". Topics include needs of the mentally ill, the deviants in our society, child development and mental handicap, role of the social worker (the only session to be introduced by a woman, not surprisingly), politics of mental health (introduced by Tony Smythe of MIND, the organisation behind the recent Women & Psychiatry conference - see next *Spare Rib*). Fee are £1.60 per full day with reduced rates for students and OAPs. Contact SMA at 54 Finchley Court, London N3 1NH.

protection and refuge." The petition is available from Mary Wykes, 68 Lyndale Road, Whoberley, Coventry CV5 8LQ.

A Dossier of papers, resolutions, reports of workshops from the 1974 Edinburgh Women's Conference

This dossier is being lovingly compiled by the Radical Women's Group in Canterbury. Probable cost will be 25p. Please could groups or individuals send workshop reports, papers, etc to RWG, c/o Students Union, University of Kent, Canterbury. "A4foolscap stencils if this is possible. We would also like to include photographs, although they need to be very sharp and clearly defined."

Gay Rights Media Group

Homosexual journalists have banded together with other gay people working in radio, television and films to form a pressure group to fight for gay rights. The NUJ has confirmed that it will give full support to any journalist dismissed because of his or her homosexuality. Reports on the treatment of homosexuality by the media will be compiled and published. Further details from Michael Mason or Denis Lemon at 01-995 1958 (day) or Stephen Cohen at Windsor 68810 (evening). However from the minutes of a recent meeting it seems that few gay women are taking part. Lesbian feminists please get involved.

A British women's directory and handbook for direct action

is being compiled. Frances Pinter would like information from groups and individuals involved in any kind of activity relevant to women. Contact her at 161 West End Lane, NW6, tel: 328 6758.

The Bermondsey Lamp Post Free School

is an alternative education project which has been running on a shoestring in a depressed area of London for two years. They are finally moving into their own building and are very much in need of the following: TV, bicycles, typewriters, a fridge, a deep freeze, shelving and modern storage units, educational equipment. If anyone can help, please phone Lois Acton 407 1740 or Rina Vergano 650 8380.

agit prop



Anti-SPUC Posters and Stickers

Two posters about 8" x 13" are available (see illustration). Slogan on the second poster is 'Every child a wanted child'. Posters are 10p for 10 plus 3p postage. There are also stickers in sheets of ten at 20p for ten sheets plus 5p postage. Orders to Jackie Titton, 37 Kinross Close, Kenton, Middx.

Campaign for homes and sanctuaries for battered women and children

Coventry Women's Liberation Group are circulating a paper and petition which was discussed at the Edinburgh conference describing the lack of accommodation for battered women and their kids. "Your petitioners pray that this House enact legislation making the Government and Council provide

exhibitions

Loughborough Women's Rights Exhibition

The exhibition traces discrimination and social attitudes to women from the cradle to the pension books. The material includes posters, photos, information leaflets and a specially designed game - Womanopoly. It's a dice game for woman vs. man. To start men thrown a six and women two sixes. Position no. 2 reads "Man: take up an apprenticeship, go forward 2. Women: take a job to tide you over till marriage, go back to start."

Central Public Library, Loughborough, Leicestershire, November 11-16. For further information on Loughborough Women's Rights Group, contact R. Sinclair, 23 Kirkstone Drive, Loughborough, tel: 66351 or J. Harris, Bradgate Road, Loughborough, tel: 39607.

Women Photograph Men

The group of photographers who put on a show at the Half Moon Gallery of photographs of women is now planning a second exhibition, this time of men. They would like to contact other women photographers who would like to contribute. Please contact Julia Meadows, 27 Stepney Green, London E1. Tel: 01-790 7649.

theatre

Sex and Consciousness

The first play at the Almost Free Theatre's season *Sex and Consciousness* was *Rialto Prom* by Sue Todd.

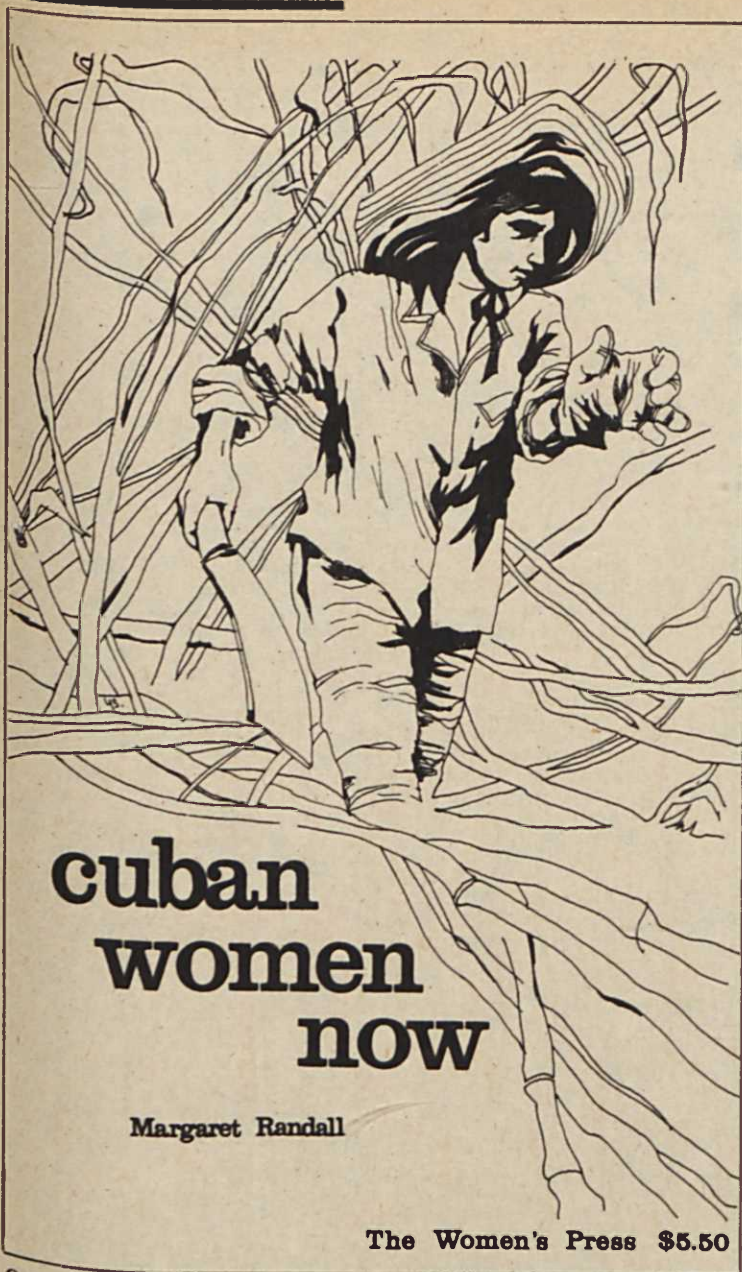
The scene is set in the Ladies at a ballroom where a group of friends are tarting up for the Saturday night fray. As they pull up their bra straps and paint their faces, they angle for reassurance from one another - rarely receiving it. They take sides against one another and make jokes at each other's expense. In fact they behave like people unwillingly under siege - forced together for defence. And it soon becomes clear that far from being their launching pad into the dance, the ladies is really an island of security. More than that, it's a place where they can be themselves, laugh, joke and create. Their dressing and making-up does appear as a creative act in itself.

Three women make up a dowdy fourth with ritualistic intensity, proceeding step by step from spot-squeezing to face-shaping. The satisfaction they feel when she's "done" is that of a contented artist faced with a finished object.

Just as the preparatory ritual has become satisfying in itself, so has their friendship. Ostensibly they are just hunting in a pack. But in reality they are self-sufficient. When one of the group actually does find a man the sense of desolation which fills the others isn't just envy. The good times they have together are threatened - yet to leave one another is what they are there for and the intention behind the prolonged tarting up in the ladies. The complex relationship proves too much for the play and it ends with an awkward joke.

The next play in the season is Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Cock Artist*, Almost Free Theatre, Rupert Street, London W1, November 11-December 14.





cuban women now

Margaret Randall

The Women's Press \$5.50

Cuban Woman Now by Margaret Randall
Cuban Woman Now, which has been published in Spanish in both Cuba and Mexico, is a description with photos of the endless changes which 25 women have undergone since the revolution in 1959. "Growing out of the economic independence of women, assumptions about the nature of the family are now being seriously re-examined in Cuba. The problem of women's "second job" - the maintenance of the home and family - has become the focus of public discussion."

Cuban Woman Now is published at \$5.50 by the Women's Press (Canadian Women's Educational Press), 280 Bloor Street West, No. 305, Toronto, Ontario Canada. (A useful pamphlet to read at the same time would be Red Rag Pamphlet no. 1, *Towards a Science of Women's Liberation - An Analysis from Cuba*, 15p from 9 Stratford Villas, London NW1, which also explores the nature of women's second shift in the home.)

Breaking Up by Rosemary Simon
A Practical Guide to Separation, Divorce and Coping on Your Own, Arrow Books, 65p.

Questions like how do you get a separation or divorce? What are your rights to the family home? Do you

qualify for legal aid? What should you know about maintenance? Who can help if you are short of money? are investigated in this paperback. The practical guidance is more interesting than the somewhat conventional sociological accounts of "falling in love".



Ouverture de la librairie des femmes
68 rue des S^{ts} Pères Paris 7 222.02.08 le jeudi 30 Mai.
Elle sera ouverte sans interruption tous les jours de 11 heures du matin à minuit. Dans cette librairie, on trouvera tous les livres écrits par des femmes et les premières parutions des éditions des femmes (également en vente dans toutes les librairies.)



The Women's Bookshop in Paris
For feminists in France, this bookshop (la librairie des femmes) has been open since June, from 11am to midnight. It stocks women's books and the first titles published by Editions des Femmes. 68 rue des S^{ts} Peres, Paris 7e. tel: 222 0208.

Books recently in paperback
Hidden from History by Sheila Rowbotham, Pluto Press 75p. The story of 300 years of women's oppression and the fight against it.
Not in God's Image
edited by Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, Fontana 80p. A close-up picture of the status and role of women from prehistoric Greece to the 19th century with a very clear linking commentary.
Descent of Woman by Elaine Morgan, Corgi 60p. An amusing account of the evolution of woman seen through a woman's eyes.
Women, Resistance and Revolution by Sheila Rowbotham, Pelican 60p. Describes the developing relationship between feminism and revolutionary socialism with reference to Britain, America, France, Russia and China.

publications

Mothers in Action have produced a Publications List comprising survival kits, fact sheets, study pamphlets (unsupported mothers, adoption etc), and target pamphlets (recommendations on pregnancy, day care, housing). The list with order form is available from Mothers in Action, Munro House, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

Women in the Student Movement
A schematic but clear contribution from the Central London Student Branch of the Communist Party. The CP is unusual among left wing organisations in accepting the need for an autonomous women's liberation movement. However feminist students may be sceptical of this pamphlet's exclusive orientation towards the NUS women's campaign (see report of recent NUS women's briefing conference in this issue). The pamphlet is available from the Student Organiser, CPGB, 16 King Street, London WC2 8HV.

Know, inc. NEW! Categorized Price List

"Throughout history the publishing industry has been dominated by males... in 1969 Know, inc. was conceived in Pittsburgh by members of NOW to offer some feminist perspective to the industry, i.e. freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press." This catalogue of many many facets of women's liberation publications is available from P.O. Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Penn 15221. There are some good titles, e.g. *The Mind Rapists*: a bibliography for persons seeking help for mental pain.

Getting Unmarried and Having your Baby are two pamphlets from Swansea Women's Liberation and Swansea Women and Health respectively. Both are comprehensive self-help accounts and full of pictures. Particularly useful in *Having your Baby* is a glossary of terms e.g. epidural, episiotomy, haemoglobin. Both pamphlets available (5p plus postage) from 53 Bryn Road, Swansea.

Pavement

A sample copy of Wandsworth's free press is available at 6p from 8 Falcon Road, London SW11. It's been running monthly for the last 2½ years but there are plans for expansion to a fortnightly. The September issue contained an

account of wages paid to 14-15 years old girls working in the summer holiday, e.g. 17½p per hour for a Saturday worker in a hairdresser's. The paper also reports that Wandsworth Women's Aid recently got a donation from workers on the *Sunday Times*, but is desperate for more cash. They are still waiting for a promised Council grant: contact Juliette 870 3786 or Eileen 870 0037.

Gallery, An Illustrated Poetry Magazine

Autumn/winter edition now available at 35p per copy from 15a Alexandra Mansions, West End Lane, London NW6. Valerie Sinason, who edits it, hopes that the magazine will gradually represent more and more women poets. "Although only one third of the poets are women in the first issue their poems are almost half and largely the major ones." There are plans also for a women's anthology after a few issues. Women illustrators are also encouraged to contact Valerie.

Oil Soaked and Crazy

A pamphlet of 16 poems by women, available from Women's Poetry Group, 48 Oxford Avenue, Southampton, Hants, for 10p plus 5p post.

Study War No More

This CND pamphlet by Zoe Fairbairns, who edits *Sanity* and sifts the media for *Spare Rib*, looks at military involvement in British universities and colleges, and aims to show that 'academics involved are forfeiting any claim they might once have had to political 'objectivity' and clearly lining up with the right wing forces which the army represents." 20p from CND, 14 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

During the Depression

Dear Spare Rib,
I am putting together an anthology of ordinary people's reminiscences of what it was like for them during the Depression. I would be glad if any of your readers would send me in writing, or on tape, their memories of that time to be considered for publication. It doesn't matter if they have never written anything before. I would like them to tell their own story simply in their own words. Nigel Gray, 6 Green Street, Lancaster. tel: 60229.

Truncheons in the Park

Malice or Incompetence? ask Release in their report of police actions at this summer's now famous/notorious Windsor free festival. The report is available from 1 Elgin Avenue, London W9 3PR. tel: 289 1123.

Correction

The Aware Health Clinic mentioned in issue no. 29 does not exist (yet). People wishing to contact the Women's Health Collective should do so through AWARE, 14, Radnor Terrace, SW8.

Racist sensationalism?

Spare Rib's reply to the correspondence about India is held over to next month.

spareRib needs fulltime designer second and last weeks of every month. Commitment to *spareRib* and to feminism, and ability to work long hours for little pay, more important than design training. Ring 0-437 2070, 10-30-6 Mon-Fri.

CLASSIFIEDS

GROUPS

Hatfield. Anyone interested in starting Women's Group Contact Salle Gray Hatfield 66019.

Anyone in Weymouth / Portland area interested in starting a group, contact J.B. Dorland, 69 Croft Rd, Weston, Portland, Dorset. DT5 2HH.

Farnham area women's group? Ring Helen. Farnham 22800.

Grimsby Women's Group wants to expand and set up a centre for battered wives. Meetings every Tuesday. 8.00pm, 12 Frederick St, Grimsby.

Hendon area. New group contact Elaine or Lynne at 01-202-8535

Are there any groups in the Hanley or Stoke area? Alison, 33 Northwood Court, Ringland Close, Hanley.

North and West London Political study group. Additional members welcome. Contact Dot 452-6249 or Kerstim 995-4130.

Other Spare Rib readers near Barton Mills, Bury St Edmunds, contact Sue Capel. Phone Mildenhall 714151.

HEALTH GROUP forming in Tufnell Park. All interested please phone Olivia 607-4845.

Gay woman welcome at CHE London Youth Group. Contact Janet at 673-2703 or write Chelic, 22 Gt Windmill St., London W1.

Homosexual/Bisexual Women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice - make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send 9 x 4 sae to CHE (332) 28 Kennedy St., Manchester 2.

Homosexual Women and Men can ring Ice-breakers on 01-274 9590

BOOKS ETC.

Women's Books, wide range available from 11 Waverley Rd, Bristol 6

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

Edinburgh's largest selection of gay and women's liberation books and pamphlets available from Shirlee's stall, Greyfriars Market, 14 Forrest Rd.

Nuclear Testing can mean cancer, damaged babies, and war. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament fights against all nuclear weapons. Keep in touch by reading Sanity - £1 per year. CND, 14 Grays Inn Rd., London WC1.

Anti-Apartheid News describes what life is like in Vorster's South Africa, carries news of the liberation struggle in South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia and Portugal's African colonies, exposes British collaboration with apartheid - and involves you in the fight against it. 10 issues a year. Membership of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (which includes subscription to AA News), £2 pa: subscription only, 75p pa. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte St., London W1. Tel. 01-580 5211.

Mra: documents from and about Arab women includes Leila Khaled on Women's Liberation and the Palestinian Revolution and the Women's struggle in the Arab gulf. 18p plus 5p P & P from Box 1. Funny Farms, 66 York Way, London N.1.

HOUSING

Bedsit West London wanted. Gina 794 2503.

Two Lesbian artists seek urgent accommodation Centralish.

FLAT. SWOP: large basement South Kensington. 23 Year Lease (renewable) 2 Large 4 small rooms. 2 loos bathroom kitchen. Mortgage £25 week for 7 years. Beautiful gardens. c.h. h.w. I want something smaller but central. Would also consider selling half, or arranging a lease. 01-373 9355 Box no. 303.

Big converted stable with garden. Offers over £30,000? Phone Pluckley (Kent) 200.

About £5,000 needed for share in eight bedrooomed Wandsworth House. Extensive coachhouse. Ring 673-3853 6-10 pm or weekends.

HELP FORM WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE. Aim active involvement. Share House/flat. Box no. 304.

SERVICES

HUMANISTIC AND FEMINIST THERAPY in London and Cambridge. Free initial interview phone 01-402 9475 leaving name and number.

Natural Child-birth and child-care classes with preparation through Yoga, meditation and nutrition. contact Gurudain Kaur, 3HO Foundation 22 All Saints Road, London W11. Tel: 727 8487.

See Red Posters. Requests Enquiries 18 Camden Road 267 2309.

Cheer your friends up. We've produced eight really nice punchy feminist postcards. Please order in multiples of sixteen. minimum order 16 at 60p. incl. p & p. Feminist Books. PO Box HP5 Leeds 6.

Homosexual Women and Men can ring Ice-breakers on 01-274 9590 every evening of the year between 7.30 & 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people.

Woman Psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area Tel: 01-348 5593

Gentle Ghost services include: artists cooking, decorating, domestic services, dressmaking, gardening, journalism, research, removals, secretarial and teaching; but try us for anything and we may be able to help. 01-603 2871 services: 603 2865 removals; 603 3729 restaurant, 603 8983 help advice and information. 33 Norland Rd, London W11.

Women At Home can study for interior design diploma through accredited correspondence course. Colour prospectus from Dept. SR, Rhodoc International, School of Design, Rhodoc House, Yelverton, Devon PL20 6DY

Female/female exclusive introductions: highly confidential service for release, friendship, liberation, etc. SAE - "Lesbos and Ariadne" The Golden Wheel Liverpool L15 3HT

Gentle Ghost Help, Advice and information. If there is no-one you can share your problems with or if you are suffering from the unrealities of our materialist society, come along to 33 Norland Rd., W11. (2nd floor) where there will be someone you can talk to (in private); or phone 01-603-8983 Mon-Sat 10am-6pm.

Join Friendly Groups of young people (20-35) with similar interests going out together in London meals/films/shows etc. London Linkup: 278 6783 / 4 (office)

CLAP. Community Levy for Alternative Projects. Pay your CLAP Tax. Send 14½p in stamps. Or does your inspired project need money? Send Maximum 200 words. CLAP c/o BIT, 146 Great Western Road, London W11. (01-229 8219)

GENERAL

Lesbian Feminist in New York wants information on life, services, centres, movements etc in England for Lesbians. D. Shaw, Apartment 5A, 226 East Third Street, New York City, New York 10009 USA.

NEUROTIC (Ex-institutional Psychologist) would very much like to contact fellow sufferers. Box no. 302.

MURDERED: 700 Children at 'Home' yearly in Britain 4-5,000 seriously/permanently injured. Raise your voice for the silent helpless minority. Write MP's. Urge new attitudes and policy, justice not rigid law for children at risk. Urge support of Children's Bill. Press for expediency in Parliament. Child orientated policies. Drop adult bias. Details ICARE 39 Stoke Rd, Linslade, Beds.

Post Diploma student willing to work with women's groups, Aid-Centres, researchers etc. on any screen-printing/graphics/photography (for cost of materials only) phone daytime: 734-4464 Chris Treweek

Introverted bi-girl seeks friends Bristol/Bath.

SUFFRAGETTE Historical items for sale - 6 copies (originals) 'Votes for Women' newspaper. Also 19 original postcards of leaders, some humorous, also a badge. £60 required o.n.o. rare and marvellous collection. Radley, 197 Linton Road, Barking, Essex.

Very Cheap second-hand shop, needs new things sole support for the Ark playgroup in Kilburn. Open every afternoon except Sundays. Ring 328-2003 or go to Kingsgate Fair, 66 Kingsgate Road NW6.

Spare Rib Distribution survey: please could you help by going to your local newsagent and asking if they stock Spare Rib. If the answer is no, find out why, and send any information to Distribution, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

Wanted people with kids aged 2 - 3 interested in working out a rota. Must live near Willesden Green. Ring 459 3200

Legal and Financial Independence. (5th Demand) one-day conference to discuss the demand and plan campaigns now on Dec 7th, 10am - 5pm. North London Polytechnic, Holloway Road (Holloway Road Underground) 25p. For information contact Leo Wilson, 21 Castle Street, High Wycombe, Tel: 01-671-2779.

Conference on Female Sexuality, January 10th-12th. Contact: Maria, 31 Park St, Brighton now. Limited numbers.

ESSEX SEMINARS IN SOCIAL HISTORY & WOMEN'S HISTORY GROUP. One Day Conference on VICTORIAN SEXUALITY - Friday, November 22nd, 1974. Details from Departmental Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ.

JOBS
SOLOAN HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Admin. worker for non-hierarchical co-operative operating in South London. Some typing and ability with figures necessary, but willingness to make a positive contribution to the running of the organisation more important. Money negotiable. Phone Andy Dunning on 274 9998/9/0.

If you want to join or start a group, find work or a travel companion, start a household or share a house, have something to sell or swap... then run your own Classified Ad.

Rates: 5p per word, 10p caps. £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for box numbers.

Payment: Ads. must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St. London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

Copy date: Nov. 21 for Dec. 17, Dec. 18 for Jan. 22, Jan. 23 for Feb. 26.

Tick if Box No required

Tick if Semi-display required

I enclose £..... for..... no of issues.

Name:.....

Address:.....

Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box.

Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
10		
13		
16		
19		
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28		
31		
34		

CARREFOUR

personnel (Canada)

Many of our jobs could be got through normal channels (large agencies) but we have a few that are different. If you'd like to come to an employment agency that will give you an honest service call in at Carrefour

Carrefour
1 Long Acre
London WC2E 9LH
Tel: 01-240-3116 (10 lines).

Info...Odds & Sods...A

letters....

Dear God,
I have spoken to you over a trial period, some years ago but you did not seem to be listening: As you are a man you won't understand this either; But when I ask you to remind me on my death bed, that I shall never clean another kitchen floor, clean the gas stove, sinks, handbasins and lavatories, vacuum the carpets, fetch the food, prepare and cook it, come rain shine sickness and health, make beds or dust.

Also remind me, if you are not too busy, that my weight of guilt that I was irritably with my children and sometimes hit them and that I am the direct cause of anything that has subsequently gone wrong with them, will never burden me again.
Oh and thank you for giving me the ennobling suffering I have endured being plain, when all females are assessed mainly on their personal appearance. I just hope to God I don't meet you, when I finally do snuff it.
Anonymous.

publishing contacts

Four of us in Merseyside WL have been in the process of writing a non-sexist Childrens Reading Scheme for the past 2½ years. We have now written 11½ books and are as we anticipated having difficulty in finding a publisher. If any sisters have any contacts in publishing or any advice to offer we would be glad if they would get in touch with us. The address is:

25 Byron Road,
Lydiat,
Liverpool,
or phone 051-526 2176 evenings, reverse charges.

In addition we would be more than pleased to hear from any woman who would like to help with the illustrations for the scheme.
Jenny Flintoft.

W.M.- elitist club?

We have just returned from a supposed Women's Movement meeting. With a little experience of past meetings we would like to express the disquiet we feel about the way the meetings of this particular group have been run.

We would like to point out that our stance is of self-supporting women, sympathetic to the Movement, although not attached to a group as yet. Our purpose of going to the meeting was to gather more information about the Movement and to meet some of the women involved, with a view to being able to help in the struggle.

The reception afforded us was distinctly cool, as was the case at previous meetings. The other members seemed completely self-interested, chatting amongst themselves about their own "liberated" state and mutual friends.

They made no attempt to get to know us although we were newcomers.

Our reason in bringing this incident to your attention is not out of personal grievance, but out of concern for the treatment of other women, perhaps less confident than us, and perhaps in distress, who make the effort to meet the group in the hope of finding support and friendly informed guidance.

We would be interested to know if other have met with this "one-upmanship" in groups in the Movement.

Surely the Women's Movement should be progressive, helpful, informative and willing to accept support and give it: not merely an elitist club?

Yours

Two 'Worrieds'

PS We prefer to withhold our names, as we feel that the printing of our names might lead to further ill feeling.

PPS On second thoughts, to show that we are sincere, our names and addresses are: Angharad Thomas

141 Hyde Park Road, Leeds 6 and

Hilary Diaper

147 Victoria Road Leeds 6

history of fashion

I would be extremely grateful if you could help me in finding some reading material.

I am a third year Art student trying to write my thesis on the distortion of the female figure as a result of fashion, male idealism eg the Victorian women used to wear corsets in order to have very slender waists which were thought to be the ultimate in beauty and yet caused extreme abdominal suffering. I have tried the city libraries and magazine shops for written material that even slightly touches the subjects, but I have had almost no success.

The lengths to which women have gone simply to look attractive for men is fascinating-surely someone has written about it!

As your articles seem so well researched and informed I thought perhaps you might have some knowledge on my subject.

Please let me know if you can help.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wood

*Here are a few suggestions that I hope will be of some use. A book has just been published in hardback by John Murray called "Health Art and Reason", and it's by a woman called Stella Mary Newton. It deals with Fashion and its constraints in the Victorian era. There is also a book on Chinese foot binding called "History of a Curious Erotic Custom" by Howard Levy, New York 1966, which is very interesting. You can probably order that from the library. See also an essay called "The Corset as Erotic Alchemy" in the book "Woman as Sex Object" by Elizabeth C Barker and Thomas B Hess, published by Allen Lane. Have you thought of contacting the Archivist at your local museum, or maybe even writing to the Victoria and Albert? You might be able to extract quite a lot of useful information from sources such as these. Keep in contact: we would be very interested to know how you get on.

help for homeless women

I am working in a Home for Homeless Women - in fact a bit of a euphemism as most of the people who come here are classed as inadequate or delinquent. We are tying in with the local Adventure Playground and planning to help some of the local kids to learn to read, and to have Bingo sessions for the mums.

I would be very pleased to hear from people who are working on similar projects, or anyone who would like to know more about us.

Thanks

Pamela J Woodroffe

Haven Project for Homeless Women

31 Tennyson Road, Wolverhampton

Tel. 738127.

advice on sex

I don't know where to turn at the moment and I hope you can help me; where does one go to find expert confidential and not too expensive help and guidance about what seems to my husband and me, a very serious problem in our sex life?

So please, if you can help with some information as to where we can share this problem - send whatever you can -

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely

Sian,

Kent

*It's hard to give precise information without knowing a bit more about the problem: However there seem to be at least two sources of immediate help.

"Forum" magazine has set up a personal, confidential advisory service on a non-profit making basis - so it shouldn't be too expensive. It consists of an hour long consultation with a doctor, psychiatrist, or sexologist, whichever is appropriate to your needs and couples can be seen together or individually. Write for an appointment to:

The Forum Personal Advisor

2 Bramber Road

London W14 9PB

If the problem is rooted in your emotional relationship and likely to need long term help, an alternative would be to contact the

Tavistock Institute of Human Relations

120 Belsize Lane

London NW3

GPs can refer their patients to the Tavistock, so it is possible to get this treatment free.

depressives anonymous

After reading the article on Post Natal Depression (Baby Blues), by Nemone Lethbridge I was struck by the good sense of having a Depressives Anonymous organisation. Since then I have written twice to her via SR but received no reply. Unable to put the idea to one side I wrote to Ms Stephenson whose address appeared in the article. I was happily surprised to hear that her group is successful and still growing. I am anxious to follow suit but feel there might be others in London who have written to NL but got no reply. To begin with it would be as well if we got together to organise ourselves. I feel that, because of its size, London presents its own peculiar problems. There are already a number of organisations offering help to the com-

munity. Research into who they are, where they are, what they do and how they could help. Depressives Anonymous would not go amiss. So often a voluntary group feels that another group is poaching on its territory. This professional jealousy has no part among those who genuinely wish to help others through their own experience and understanding. Perhaps personal visits and discussions with these local groups could start matters off on a right footing. After many forays in my locality I still don't know all that available to help people, be they badly depressed or gloomy mums pissed off with holiday-bored kids.

Anyway, if anyone's interested in NL's brainchild, perhaps they'd like to get in touch with me and get something going.

Love Anne Gaines

243 Dartmouth Road

Sydenham, London SE26 4QY

Tel. 01-699 1655

PSTo Nemone. Hope you aren't floundering in a fit or depression. Mrs S says you are probably writing another play to help pay the rent!!

Nemone Lethbridge writes:

Some of the people who wrote to me after my piece in Spare Rib, "Postscript to Baby Blues", will not have had answers to their letters.

I'm very sorry about this but I moved house and had a burglary and lost a lot of my post as a result.

breast surgery

Could you please give me some information on the subject of surgery to the breast. I am twenty, my body frame is very small and light (I am 5 foot and 2 inches high and I weigh 8 stones) yet my boobs are fantastically large and physically get in my way. I wouldn't mind if I had a larger body to cope with them.

I haven't yet approached my local GP as I feel unsure of his reaction, i.e. "Go away and be content with your lot." I also feel I need to know the facts, cost and availability of the operation from an unbiased source, without recriminations.

Love Sue

Worcs.

*Dear Sue

You should first attempt to proceed through the normal channels, i.e. get a letter from your GP which will refer you to a regional centre where these operations are performed by plastic surgeons. But as to whether your particular case is accepted or not is another matter. It will depend very much on the merits of your particular circumstances and whether you can prove first to your GP and then to your consultant that the size of your breasts is seriously damaging your mental well-being. If you manage this you will be put on a waiting list to have cosmetic surgery on the National Health (which may mean quite a wait). Otherwise you will have to pay for the operation to be performed privately, which will of course be very expensive. The operation is reputed to be highly successful and merely involves the removal of fatty tissue, leaving a small barely visible scar at the base of the breast.

Advice...Info...Odds &

RED LADDER

MOBILE WORKERS' THEATRE.

Red is the colour of their politics, on the ladder they show us the hierarchy of political power in society, mobility is one of their working principles, workers of all kinds are their audiences and theatre is the form through which they communicate. They tend not to use two words where one will do.

The group came out of an organisation called Agitprop Information, a broad-ranging propaganda workshop formed in 1968, around the peak of the sixties student movement. People involved in Agitprop were trying to disseminate socialist information in a direct, popular way - through pamphlets, posters, street theatre. The Agitprop theatre group did several plays on housing estates in the East End in 1968, as part of the rent strikes organised by tenants' associations against attempts by the Greater London Council to raise rents. They also did a play outside Fords, in Dagenham, and gradually built up more contacts within the trade union movement.

Two years ago they applied for, and were given, an Arts Council grant which enabled most of the group to work full-time. There are currently five men and four women, eight of them full-time. They travel in a big red van, with their own rostra and lights, introduce their plays and chair discussions after them.

In the last two years they have done five plays: on Unemployment, which raised the question of wage differentials between men and women, on Technology - and its effect on white and blue-collar workers, on the Industrial Relations Bill and on the Housing Finance Act. In travelling around with this last play, performing it to Tenants and Community Associations, they found 'that a lot of Tenants Associations, and the most militant ones, were run by women and they were having a running fight with the men to make them understand that the question of struggle and fighting and politics was not just a question of work, but a question of home as well... and that fed directly into the way we made the women's play.'

The women's play is the fifth play, and the one they're currently performing most. It's called **STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT**, and like their other recent work is a mixture of straightforward agitprop, clear arguments and analyses conveyed through mime, bold visual images, hints of music-hall caricature, wit. It was begun two years ago and then put into cold storage; they began work on it again a year ago, and took six months to complete it, talking with women in all sorts of organisations in the course of their research. I talked to two members of the group, Steve and Glen (male and female).

The men of property took women who belonged to them alone, like slaves, and only had their offspring - and called them WIVES.

Steve: The general principle is that we take the plays to working class audiences. We deliberately avoid going to conventional theatres where the audience is more diverse and generally speaking, middle class.

Glen: Well, you've got to be careful what you mean by middle class. We do a lot of work for white collar unions, like NALGO and ASTMS, and the white collar section of the Engineering Union.

Steve: The sort of audience you get in the theatre tend to enjoy and share bourgeois values, which is usually reinforced by the sort of play you see there. We're deliberately trying to create a theatre that has different values, a working class theatre in the sense that it can contribute to people's struggles, not just reflect and show it in a descriptive way. That's why we see the discussion afterwards as fifty percent of our work. We don't perform the play unless we can have a discussion, because there's a communal and shared experience in watching a play and it's important to draw that out in the discussion afterwards. So that people can exchange their various experiences in relation to what they've seen.

Glen: It's to do with people working together really.

Ideas and comments which have come out of a discussion are often incorporated in their plays which are always open to criticism modification and change.

Glen: We decided to work in sub-committees on the plays; with the women's play we started off with studying the question... somebody went and read Shulamith Firestone and somebody read Engels and then we had discussions in which one person would lead on what they'd read. Then we came up with the broad principles about what we wanted to say, and then four people, three women and one man, went off and worked out a basic structure. We worked it out in terms of a developing individual consciousness, something that's quite crucial to most of our indoor plays, because we want to show someone who's actually in a learning situation.

Steve: It's the placing of the individual experience within the framework of the underlying economic structures which in fact predetermine people's role in life. We take a woman going through the experience of young marriage, romance, the home situation of being stuck with kids, getting a part-time job in a sweatshop, getting a job in the factory, seeing the need for organisation, seeing the need for struggle, alongside men but also against some of the oppressions that men create for women.

Vicar: Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?

Helen's Dad: I do.

Vicar: Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife? Wilt thou love her and keep her, honour and comfort her in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, for as long as ye both shall live...

Dave's Mum (aside): You've got a responsibility now, Dave. Make her a good home for the kids, same as your Dad did for me and she won't mind who wears the trousers.

Dave: I will.

Vicar: Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband? Wilt thou honour and obey him, and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him for as long as ye both shall live...

Helen's Mum (aside): I've always found that if you look after a man proper, he'll look after you. It's the little things that count: having dinner ready when he gets home and his slippers out. Makes him feel appreciated, like he's the man in the house.

Helen: I will.

Vicar: I now pronounce you man and wife.

Dave is eating his supper. Helen serves him.

Helen: Elsie next door said she'd babysit if we wanted to go out tonight.

Dave: Not tonight, love...

Helen: There's a good picture on at the Odeon. Love Story.

Dave: No, I'm too tired, love, really...

Helen: You're always too tired these days.

Dave: I just want to stay in and put me feet up. Alright?

Helen: Well, I want to get out. I've been stuck at home all day and I'm tired of it. It's not fair.

Dave: It's not a question of being fair. You moan about being in all day - I've got to go and slave me guts out at work. It's just the way things are. (There is a cartoon-like mime and narrative section on the origin of the family, private property and the development of capitalism; and their changing impact on the position of women in society.)

Helen: What about going out tomorrow night, then?

Dave: Oh, what a shame. Not tomorrow, love. Union meeting. Very important.

Helen: What, have they put the price of beer up? Oh, unions. You're like a bunch of kids.



Question: How do you decide what your plays are going to be about?

Steve: It's a question of assessing what's going on at the moment, and seeing in the future where the main areas of conflict are arising and how best we can contribute through our kind of work.

Glen: The pressure to do work on women got bigger and bigger. I think it was a correct decision to do the play on women, and to do it in the way we have.

Question: Was it a more difficult play to work on than the others?

Steve: More difficult, I think, because we had to sit down and start from scratch. There was so little theory on the question of women on the Left. And we had to thrash out a line which was virtually our line, our own position.

Glen: It's such a complex question because you're dealing with half the population. There was so much we wanted to show; anyway the play turned out to be half an hour longer than it should have been.

Question: Were the women in Red Ladder involved in the women's movement?

Glen: Well, at first I think our interest in it was fairly marginal, not on principled grounds but for practical reasons. When we were first writing the play we were working something like 50-60 hours a week. It was just absurd, everyone was falling apart. Then what happened was that the first draft was completely chucked out. And I think that was because women in the group were getting more involved in the women's movement. One girl had been to Cuba and had been very involved in the women question there. There was a sort of struggle within the group as well, because of doing that play. The women suddenly became very belligerent and insisted on making visible some of the invisible things in the group which was very good.

Steve: In the early days of the group there was a lot of antagonism, which, because it wasn't in the context of talking about the question of women theoretically, was a very personalised conflict. I think talking about it in a much broader context resolved people to antagonisms which could now be seen more objectively. It was a learning process for the men as well as for the women.

Glen: We always attempt to have a woman chairing the discussions, on principle.

Steve: None of us are members of any political parties but not because that's a point of principle. We all examine that question for ourselves, so it's not out of the question that group members will become members of political organisations. People on the other hand are involved outside group - in trade unions, the Working Women's Charter, Equity, immigrant workers, nursery campaigns and study groups. Basically the group are all socialists.

Glen: One area in which the group's very much agreed is that the working class should create its own organisation and its own structure to deal with its own struggles.

Steve: But we're also concerned to raise the question of the nature of organisations of the working class, on a political and not just on an economic, trade union level. For instance, on the role of Parliament and on the extent to which the working class representatives in Parliament have an effective strategy for building socialism in Britain. They're questions which I think are central to the British Left at the moment and we reflect that dilemma.

Helen is now out at work as, with two kids, they can't manage on Dave's wages alone. She is sacked from her un-unionised sweatshop job when she takes a week off to have an abortion and takes another job, in a factory. Here she joins the union, and overhearing a discussion about parity between Dave and some male workmates (illustrated with mugs of beer) she begins thinking about demanding equal pay. She and other women begin to organise.

Meanwhile, the management try and do a deal with the union: trying to wheedle the men into refusing to support the equal pay demand, in return for parity. They send a Time and Motion study man to 'evaluate' the women's jobs.

Time and Motion: You name it, I'll evaluate it. Today's problem: this lot here. The women are going for equal pay with the men and to get that they have to prove that the work they're doing is the same, or of a broadly similar nature to what the men are doing.

Capitalist (standing on the red ladder at the side): And we have to prove that it isn't.

There are three women, Helen, Sheila, and Chrissie, and one man, Mike, working on the production line.

Sheila: Hello. Trouble.

T and M (reading): Number one: skill.

(To Chrissie) Well, that doesn't look too difficult, my dear.

Chrissie: Oh, no, it's not really.

Helen: It's very fiddly. Detailed. You have to be quick with your hands, you know.

Sheila: A bloke couldn't do this job.

They're too clumsy.

Chrissie: Oh, but it's awful boring.

Capitalist (on ladder): Actually, we do find that women are naturally suited to boring monotonous work.

T and M: ... Let's have a look at the men now. (Looks at Mike.) Well, that does look extremely complicated to me, sir.

Mike: Do me a favour, I'm busy.

T and M: See that? Very busy, this lad. No time to natter, not like the women, eh. (He writes) 'High level of concentration required.' It does look extremely complicated to me, sir.

Mike: Of course it's complicated. It's all complicated, isn't it?

T and M: Oh, well, Win a few, lose a few. (He writes) 'Same level of skill'

(Mike gets up and mimes lifting something. T and M perks up.)

T and M: Did you see that, eh? Turn, bend left. ... oh, yes. Physical effort, that. And what if he dropped it, eh? 'High level of responsibility required.' Now, let's see. ... two five one times three five nine, add the weighting factor, take away the number you first thought of and ... ha ... ha ... oh, yes. Men - Grade Three. Women - Grade Four.



The use of images, concrete objects to illustrate arguments, or act as symbols is very important in Red Ladder's work. Two particularly effective ones in the women's play are the beer in the parity-equal pay discussion, and the umbrella, which together with the ladder, is a recurring symbol in the group's plays. The umbrella is an example of how they 'visualise economic relations'; capitalism is an umbrella overshadowing everything, functioning in many different ways.

Steve: We try to work collectively. We haven't by any means solved all the problems of trying to find a different way of working, a democratic way of working, where you don't have one person who dominates everything, whether it be a man or several men dominating women, or quieter less pushy men. The basic problem is that we all come from a society which is very individualistic and competitive and we bring all that weight of conditioning and experience in the work practice we have. We've built structures of rotating responsibilities for being chairman, doing different tasks in the group, dividing up the manual, day-to-day bread and butter tasks so that everyone gets a fair whack of those as well as getting the more enjoyable and interesting things to do.

Glen: If everybody's involved in all the major decisions, everything takes a lot longer. Now we're trying to split off what sort of decisions everyone's got to be involved in and how much we can delegate responsibility. So instead of say, everybody coming to decide whether to do an interview for *Spare Rib*, we ought to be able to delegate that responsibility to some for making that decision and organising it. And if we make mistakes, to learn from our mistakes and see if we can't become more productive by increased delegation. We're also much more disciplined now and much more strict about hours. It's just gone to 40 hours; it used to be 47.

Steve: When you're involved in a field of work where the essential task is a creative one, then a lot of the judgements you make are subjective, aesthetic judgements. There's a need for us to develop a more unified artistic approach which we haven't talked about theoretically enough at all.

You often find that you create an image and the full implications of it are given to you by an audience who will suddenly say 'It was really clever of you to think of using that.' Like once we had Vic Feather and a big white feather in his hat and we just thought 'Oh, very funny'. But a white feather is also a symbol of retreat and cowardice, and when we conceived it as an image that wasn't clear to us. And then it was pointed out.

Glen: We had this very clear idea about the women's play that every scene should have a concrete focus in which to present the ideas, and Brecht did this a lot. With the two images you mentioned, the beer and the umbrella. There was really no disagreement in the group about those images at all. The fact is that if you get a good artistic image everybody sees that and you don't have any problems. The one we did have problems over was the housework scene in the women's play where we couldn't find an image, and I don't think anyone in the group is satisfied with that scene.

Steve: All our plays have a separation of physical levels which is quite deliberate and we try and keep them consistent, so that when people are on

one level they operate in a certain kind of way. Physical position reflects a class position or a class alliance. So the job evaluator will appear over the top, next to the ladder.

Glen: The only time that doesn't work is in bed.

Question: What about the future?

Glen: Most of the group will continue working on new plays and songs and improving the existing ones. One of the other things we've decided to do is some work on migrant labour and imperialism, for a television programme with John Berger. Two or three of us will work with him and other people collectively on it, and from that we might do a play on racism.

Steve: It's an arts programme, based on a documentary, based on a novel written by John Berger. He's looked at the whole European situation of migrant labourers. In his novel he's got the developed in relation to the underdeveloped nations of the world, juxtaposed with passages which are very much to do with the personal experience of the migrant labourer.

Glen: Although on the media you're stuck in your own little home and don't discuss the play afterwards, it would be possible when this programme goes on to write to as many of our contacts as possible and say 'Watch this programme and discuss it at your branch or group meeting'.

Helen and the other women push the shop steward into calling a mass meeting so they can put their case. The women are to come out on strike for equal pay, and after an argument, the men vote to support them. Back home Dave is ironing his shirt. . . the kids are fed and tucked up. . .

Helen: There's another mass meeting on Saturday.

Dave: Oh, yeah? You going, then?

Helen: I'm chairing.

Dave: Oh. Who's going to look after the kids, then?

Helen: Oh, we've organised a playgroup so that more of the women can get involved.

Dave: Now that's a really good idea, love. I mean, you can go to your meeting and I can go to football.

Helen: Well, actually, love, I put you down for the playgroup. . . (The struggle continues. . .)

Red Ladder Mobile Workers' Theatre can be contacted c/o 58 Wray Crescent, London N.4. 263 1053, or 730 5396. They normally ask a fee of £20-£25, with a different scale of fees for universities and colleges. The fee is in any case negotiable for groups with limited funds. The audience is not charged admission to the play, but often a collection is taken afterwards.

Michlene Wandor.



BOOKS

Our Hidden Heritage Five Centuries of Women Artists by Eleanor Tufts Paddington Press Ltd. £5.95

Due to the noticeable absence of material on women artists in art history books, it is usually necessary to refer back to archives and documents to unearth information on women of the past. With *Our Hidden Heritage*, Eleanor Tufts helps to remedy this state of affairs.

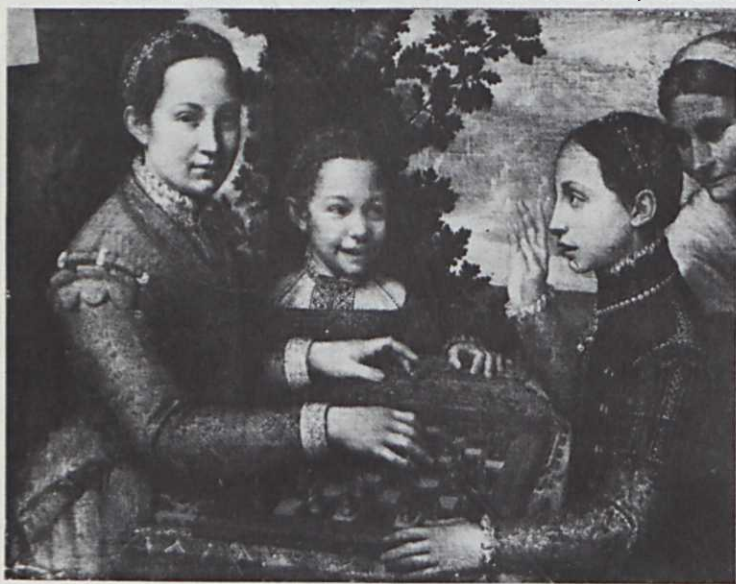
The book provides biographical information on 22 women artists who have been omitted from art history books despite their great prestige and renown during their lifetimes. It has 137 good quality black and white illustrations and 22 chapters starting with Sofonisba Anguissola of the 16th century and finishing with artists as different as Gwen John and I. Rice Pereira of the 20th century.

'Why is so little known of the great women artists of the past?' is a question Ms Tufts prefers to the familiar 'Why have there been no great women artists?'

It seems that just as history books reflect the history of the ruling classes so contemporary art history books are biased towards the history of male art and culture. The majority of teachers of art history in schools, universities and colleges still show marked reluctance to admit the significance of these women.

The 4 artists of the Renaissance whom Eleanor Tufts covers are mentioned by various chroniclers of the time. Vasari, the biographer of Renaissance artists in 1566, mentioned a portrait by Sofonisba Anguissola of her 3 sisters playing chess. He wrote of them, 'They appear alive and lacking in speech only.' Galli wrote of the portrait painter Lavinia Fontana, 'She painted the image of Pope Paul V destined for a King of Persia, portraits of ambassadors, of princes, of cardinals.' And, despite his condescending manner, Baglione said of her, 'Even though Lavinia was a woman she did extremely well in this type of painting.' The Flemish artist Lavinia Teerling, although retained as court painter by Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, and who according to official records was paid a higher salary than Holbein, little work of hers is known and it has been confused with that of her contemporary Isaac Oliver. Catherina van Hemessen, whose work hangs in the National Gallery basement, was commissioned by Queen Mary of Hungary and invited to Spain by her.

An underlying independence is apparent in the lives of these artists. For instance, Artemesia Gentileschi, who deve-



SOFONISBA ANGUISSOLA, *Three Sisters Playing Chess*



KÄTHE KOLLWITZ, *The Storming of the Owner's House*



GWEN JOHN, *Nude Girl*

loped the technique of chiaroscuro after Caravaggio, and Judith Leyster, one of the first Dutch artists to paint intimate genre scenes, both retained their own names when signing work. The Bolognese Elisabetta Sirani supported her family with her income from painting and Lavinia Fontana married a fellow student who consequently relinquished his own career in order to look after their family and paint her picture frames. In order to expand her knowledge of exotic insects and flowers the 17th century painter Maria Sybilla Merian at 55 years old went to live in the jungles of South America and later published original works from her entomological findings. Rosa Bonheur belonged to the St Simonian sect which believed in a female messiah, and Maria Sibylla Merian belonged to a sect called the Labadists who did not believe in formal marriage ties.

Other than Judith Leyster, Sofonisba Anguissola and Mary Beale all the Renaissance women painters were the daughters or sisters of artists who taught them to paint. Women were excluded from guilds. Later when it became possible for women to receive instruction outside the home there was even a reversal of the father/teacher, daughter/student relationship; Suzanne Valadon taught her son Utrillo.

What becomes clear throughout the

book is that, 'there is no perceptible distinction between the touch of the male and the touch of the female artist. Women such as Artemesia Gentileschi and Kathe Kollwitz put paid to the idea that sentimentality is the mark of women's art. While Rosalba Carriera's introduction of pastels into France, Germaine Richier's innovations in bronze sculpture and I. Rice Pereira's abstract geometric compositions with corrugated glass show that contrary to popular prejudice women have been innovators and not always followers.

The author has succeeded in her aim that, 'This book will serve as an introduction to the subject of these neglected women artists' and that we can look forward to 'closer scrutiny of the contribution of all women artists throughout the centuries.'

Although the research into lives of women artists of the past is very valuable it would be a pity for it to become the central preoccupation of feminist art historians, when a feminist perspective can be used to call into question the values and methods of art history as a whole.

Denize Cale

Zelda Fitzgerald by Nancy Milford. Penguin 75p

The American novelist Scott Fitzgerald once said of his wife Zelda - "Possibly she would have been a genius had she not met me." He touched something of the truth in saying this for as Nancy Milford's biography shows all too clearly, Zelda's potential writing talent was destroyed by her relationship with Scott. The repression of her creative energies resulted in a mental breakdown as the age of thirty from which she never wholly recovered. Scott was jealous and threatened by Zelda's literary ambitions. He arrogantly insisted on his own superiority, expressed through such things as putting his name to stories written by Zelda and his claim to exclusive possession of the literary material of their lives: "I am the professional novelist. That is all my material. None of it is your material."

Before the breakdown, Zelda had lived the early extravagantly hedonistic years of her marriage in the reflected glory of Scott's enormous success. However, after a while the futility of their wealthy life-style, the accumulated frustrations and the rocking instability of her own life drove her to throw herself into learning to dance. She hoped she might become a professional dancer and thus match Scott's success. Her frantic efforts were as much a question of personal survival as the genuine desire to dance; the strain was too great - she plunged into breakdown and was committed to a hospital. There she wrote to Scott: "At any rate one thing has been achieved: I am thoroughly and completely humiliated and broken if that was what you wanted."

The biography traces Zelda's acutely painful and lonely passage from confusion: "If I could once grasp the situation I would be much better able to handle it," to her realisation of her over-dependence on Scott and her need to be more independent and to work: "All I ask is to be able to work." But she lacked the inner strength necessary to free herself; her binding involvement and need for Scott as the only person in her life with whom she had fulfilling communication, his dominance and her psychiatrists' commitment to the traditional view of womanhood lead ultimately to her total, if resisting, mental capitulation. It would not be difficult to see her 'madness' as a retreat from an intolerable situation. Classified alternately as a schizophrenic and a woman with an inferiority complex whose ambitions for creative achievement were "self-deceptions," she spent the last 18 years of her life going in and



Zelda at 15



with Scott at 20



self portrait
probably done in her
early forties.

out of hospitals until 1948 when she died. During that time she managed to produce a number of short stories, a play and a thinly-disguised autobiographical novel called 'Save Me The Waltz'.

The biography is brimming with the raw material of one woman's oppression and consequent madness. The many quotes from Zelda's letters (which Scott found sufficiently inspired to frequently use in his novels) provide insight into the depths of her conflict with herself, her husband and the inferior role of being an unequal "complementary intelligence" to him. It is a valuable study insofar as it exposes in detail the tormented situation of a woman whose life was exploited to provide an egotistical author with fictional material while simultaneously being denied the right and encouragement to seek creative achievement of her own. Zelda once said, "I want to say when he says, something that is not so, then I

want to do something so good that I can say 'That is a bad damned lie!' and have something to back it up, that I can say it." Indeed she might have made it had the obstacles, including herself, not been so great. Nancy Milford's biography of Zelda Fitzgerald contributes a disturbing confirmation of the need for women to create their own identity, to free themselves from constricting relationships of dependence on men and to work and create outside the cage of domestic life.

Caroline Webb.

'Firegirl'
by Gibson Rich
published:
The Feminist Press
(U.S.A.)

from Compendium, 240 Camden
High St, NW1 at £1.50, or from Books,
84 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2. at £1.00

This is one of those rare books in which a heroine not only knows her own mind but also acts upon her needs. It is an exciting adventure, well told, of an eight-year old who dreams of being a firegirl. And when the moment drives to prove herself she seizes it and is right in there fire-fighting along with the men. Brenda, and with her the reader, easily identifies with the technicalities and physical activity of the job. The uncontrived and detailed illustrations give dignity to the multi racial reality depicted.

'Firegirl' would seem to be the answer to the problem of what conscientious feminists should read to their young daughters. And so it should be; after all, it was produced by a group of women whose aim is to "foster the feminist cultural revolution by providing materials strategic in altering what women learn". But this book can be recommended for everybody - boys will enjoy it too.

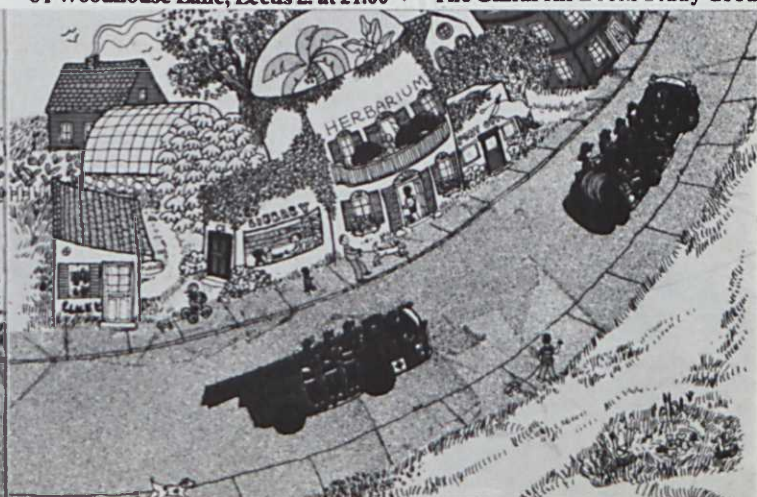
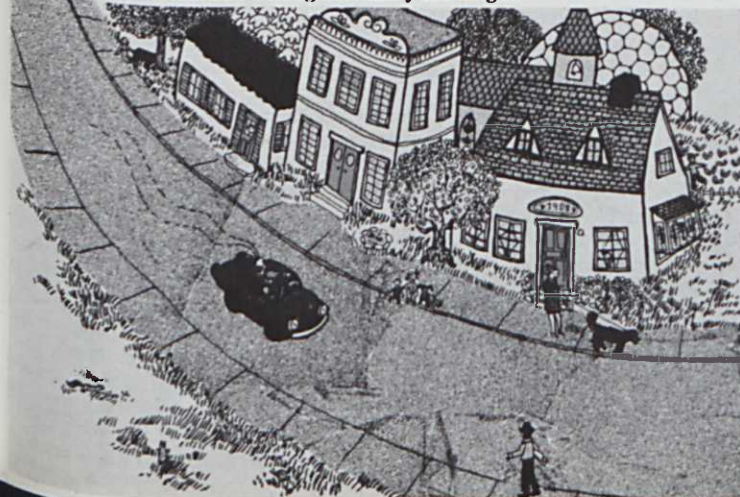
The trouble is that this book is a dangerous combination of reality and wishful thinking. After Brenda has become Supergirl for half an hour, we are returned to the same old male patronization she has suffered earlier at the hands of her own father who has told her quite categorically "girls can't be firemen, only boys can". For a young child, of either sex, to have climbed a ladder to the blazing third floor of a building, crawled through a broken window and rescue a frightened rabbit is indeed heroic. But then to be told, rather grudgingly by the Fire Chief that in future he will "let her turn on the siren, clang the bell and rescue rabbits", amounts to the treatment meted out to 'token blacks' who have tried to behave like good white citizens in countless books and films. It's a cop out. It's too much like being treated as the club mascot.

Also, isn't it time we became a bit more realistic about the way in which work is depicted in children's books? As a real live fireman indignantly wrote to say after hearing the favourable mention of this book by our group on a recent Jimmy Young Show, "I'd like to meet the woman who could carry a fourteen stone dead weight over her shoulder whilst climbing down a thirty foot ladder". This book begs that question; Brenda can only rescue rabbits. In fact the difficulties and hard work of the job are not realistically depicted. We only get the glamour. Really this is the romance of the boy who yearns to be an engine driver - revamped, with the sexes reversed.

However, having said all that, it is a good story and likely to excite the expectations of girls who might otherwise have concluded from their books that all they were cut out to be was a lady librarian or a glorified dish-washer.

by Jo Spence
The Childrens Books Study Group

Illustration by Charlotte Purrington Farley in Firegirl



Wedlocked Women by Lee Comer Feminist Books £1.

I am a spinster, a bachelor girl, I've been a daughter but not a housewife or a mother. Lee Comer's book *Wedlocked Women* is about the experience of women in the family, women as housewives and mothers. But I recognise myself as well as my mother in its pages. We are all as women, potential wives and mothers. Not just because that's what most of us will become, (or have been; do you go on and on being a housewife and a mother when your children have grown up and your husband has died?) but also because that's what we're all expected and trained to be.

The book's strength lies in its use of interviews with housewives in Leeds to shatter the ideal of the modern marriage. We are all taught that marriage is a partnership where money and responsibility are shared, and that even the divorce courts now recognise a woman's right to a third of the marital home for her labour as mother and housekeeper. And yet, 'I can't complain really, he gives me what I ask for as long as it's reasonable'. 'I'm getting more and more dissatisfied with being financially dependent, not because my husband has made any difficulties about money or considered my contribution in caring for the children unimportant, but because I *feel* dependent.'

Financial dependence is only half the story, your job never ends your time is never your own, except perhaps in the lavatory, while the real world, the important events seem to be defined by your non-participation in them. Having set out with a single great purpose in life - to have a family and a happy home you are redundant and irrelevant. Your failure is that you can not love enough, that you can not give enough. *Wedlocked Women* shows very vividly that the failure of the housewife and mother is not the failure of a person, but of a situation.

It also attacks the myths that surround and reinforce wife- and mother-hood. There are a number of useful starting off points - comics, reading schemes, advertisements, toys, classroom dynamics, anthropology, childbirth and childcare theories. But when some of these topics are developed, for example childrearing and its effect upon our idea of motherhood, Lee concentrates her attack within the sphere of academic sociology, on Bowlby's theory that full-time mothering by the mother is essential for normal child development. She does point out the enormity of what is considered normal development; that at 15 months a child is 'closely dependent on adult's reassuring presence... needs constant supervision to protect child from extended exploration and exploitation of

environment'; at 18 months is 'emotionally still very dependent on familiar adult, especially Mother'; at 2 years '... resentful of attention shown to other children'; at 2½ years 'throws violent tantrums when thwarted...'. But she doesn't explain why Bowlby's theory has had such a hold on the popular mythology of motherhood, in the face of the overwhelming evidence that it is wrong, as well as unacceptable.

Although *Wedlocked Women* is easy to read, sometimes it's difficult to disentangle the theoretical threads because of the book's structure. It's written more like a conversation with people changing and developing their ideas as they go along. This means that it can become confusing. Although the housewife has no money to call her own, later in the book where its general anti-capitalist stance becomes more pronounced the family is seen primarily as a dumping ground for consumer goods. But it's not the family as such (young single people may well be the biggest consumers, and there are other societies which are not structured around the family as the normal social unit, but which are no less Capitalist) but the nuclear family where 'Every Home must have its Own...' that is so wasteful and yet so vital to our economic system. Lee would have been on firmer ground if she'd developed more fully these apparent contradictions making clear what she meant by consumption; or concentrated on using the experiences described as living proof that the family is a unit that reproduces and nurtures the labour force cheaply - at the expense of half its members. The book's faults, though, do not matter because they inspire you to try to work out where the ideas go wrong. You can't just sit back and put the book down, because the problem has bitten too deep.

Rose Ades

FILM

Fear Eats the Soul directed by Rainer Fassbinder Distributed by Cinegate

Rainer Werner Fassbinder is proving to be one of the most important directors of the 70s, and his film *Fear Eats the Soul* which launches London's new art Cinema The Gate, is a good example of his recent work. Fassbinder's films are not specifically feminist but they are of interest to women because they deal consistently with themes in which women have an independent importance, and have been emphasised by the women's movement: the family, hysteria, and the contradictions between the oppressed and the oppressor within a class. His particular interest in individual desire challenging, or finding itself in direct conflict with, class and family ideology ties him in with the old American melodrama as it was in its greatest period in the 50s. Fassbinder acknowledges his debt to Hollywood. It is arguable that his understanding of the Hollywood melodrama, the way its greatest directors built up a picture of ideological forces and the insoluble problems of sex and desire within them, contributes to the complexity he achieves in his own work.

Fassbinder came to the American cinema through the influence of the



Brigitte Mira and El Hedi Ben Salem in *Fear Eats the Soul*

French New Wave and its acknowledged debt to Hollywood. (His first feature was dedicated to Chabrol, Rohmer and Straub, showing in itself a sense of drama.) But much more than they, he has looked back to the old melodrama as having a meaning of its own. He takes it further along its own path, transposing and bringing out its essential themes with a clarity and bitterness that comes from both the passing of time and freedom from studio supervision, quite apart from his own perceptions of contemporary German society. There are two important ways in which Fassbinder develops the American melodrama. First, he focuses with an uncompromising detachment on hysteria or the symptoms of repression in the oppressed. Although hysteria has traditionally been considered a female phenomenon, Fassbinder has brought out its meaning in men, by dealing with men who are in an ambiguous and oppressed situation (most particularly *Merchant of Four Seasons*) in relation to their class and family, men who trapped, as women are, in a way they can neither grasp nor articulate. Fassbinder uses role reversals and sex confusions in his own manner, but particularly to expand the American melodrama in a second direction, that is to take it outside the confines of the bourgeoisie. While Hollywood in the 50s dealt above all with the oppression and frustrations of the bourgeois woman Fassbinder goes into the repressions of bourgeois ideology within the working class, the lumpen proletariat and its tyranny within the petit-bourgeoisie. Women still have an unusual importance in his films, maintaining the subtly subversive tradition of the Hollywood genre at its best (made about women and for women), where women are a sign of desire and class ambiguity that makes them a potential weak link in the ideological structure.

Fassbinder has particularly acknowledged his debt to Douglas Sirk, pioneer director of some of the greatest melodramas, first in Germany in the 30s and then reaching the peak of his career with his so-called 'women's weepies' in Hollywood in the 50s. Both come from the theatre, both brought to the cinema a sense of the detachment of drama (drama as spectacle) that works against the tendency of film to absorb the spectator into itself. (They are both also conscious that the cinema is in the camera. Fassbinder quotes Sirk as saying: 'A director's philosophy is his lighting and camera angles'.) * *Fear Eats the Soul* is loosely based on Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*, not as a re-make but as a transposition.

The plot changes bring out, to begin with, the way in which working-class people are infinitely more trapped when in an intolerable situation. Having no means of escape no economic alternatives, their problem is not one of choice but of facing the situation, going under, struggling against it, in a succession of futile attempts at mastery over the world around them. At the same time, Fassbinder himself has pointed out that the escape of Sirk's hero and heroine contains the irony of the happy end: you cannot escape from yourself and your past as easily as all that.

In the Sirk film, a rich country club widow falls in love with the free-lance gardener (who comes to prune her trees) young, handsome, poor and the wrong social class. The terrified revulsion of her teen-age children, her friends and her small town community put her in a state of agonised conflict. Her love for the gardener is not only based on deep sexual re-awakening but an identification with the Utopian dream of complete social and economic self-sufficiency he is attempting to create for himself (and for her, if she can break with her past) in the countryside. In the Fassbinder, an elderly working-class office-cleaner falls in love with a Moroccan immigrant worker. They marry and she tries to incorporate him into her world, thus bringing down the racist ostracisation of her grown-up children, her fellow workers and her whole neighbourhood. But the greatest crisis comes after the couple have finally become accepted; it is difficult for her, in her gratitude at being allowed to belong again, to stay uncontaminated by the racism that pervades her surroundings. Both films bring the couple together at the end, as they realise how much they are to each other, but the man falls victim to the stress of the relationship and ends an invalid, with the woman at his bedside.

The two films have more in common than a romantic love story of an older woman ostracised for her love for a younger man of different social status. They both bring out the contradictions of women's economic position within their own class, and how they can be torn apart if they try to move outside their predestined path. In these two relationships the woman is culturally dominant, belonging by birth and marriage to a dominant class, in *All That Heaven Allows*, the higher bourgeoisie, in *Fear Eats the Soul*, the indiginous working class. In fact she is of a lower economic status than the men of her class, a housewife living off her dead husband's legacy and an office cleaner (Emmi is reluctant at first to



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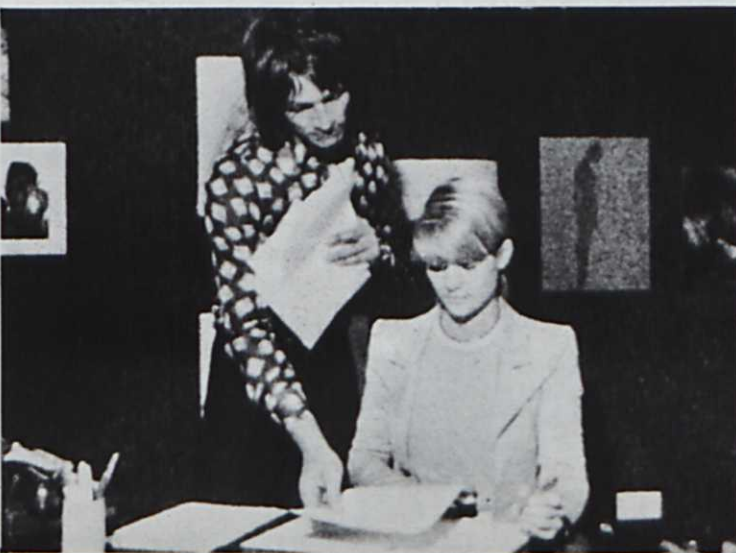
Joan and Michael Blake are arguing about Michael's habit of filling their house with obnoxious business associates. Michael relaxing while Joan waits on him says, 'Now don't be selfish, Darling. You purposely refuse to understand. I am trying to do a deal with them. They are always inviting me to their homes. . . I have to invite them here occasionally. It's only natural.' Joan, taking out the plates, capitulates, 'Yes, I know I'm sorry.' Michael continues patronisingly, 'Look, put yourself in my place.' Next moment Michael is at the sink in Joan's apron and Joan is sprawling in his chair smoking a cigar.

Throughout the film, Judy Geeson as Joan, and Christian Roberts as Michael, continue the role reversal making familiar situations appear in a new light. For example in the secretary - boss routine it is a male secretary, Henry, who hovers and giggles speechlessly when Joan asks him, 'Henry, who did you say you were going out with? Susan wasn't it?' Before she pulls him onto her knee.

Francine Winham who shot, directed and scripted the film in 1973, emphasises that she is not advocating role reversal rather a re-examination of roles. She wants the film to be used as a starting point for discussions. She says that she hopes the film will make women angry by forcing them to see their role objectively. 'Woman usually get angry on someone else's behalf, but as they have so little sense of self worth, they rarely get angry on their own behalf. As for men's reaction. . . I wanted men to know what it feels like to be a woman in lots of everyday situations when women are constantly humiliated in small ways. But it is difficult to force someone to identify with a situation that he will never be in. My problem was how to do this - so I decided they had to swap places, and men are always saying (to women) "Put yourself in my place."'

Put yourself in my place provokes as much laughter as fury. It has a similar effect to flipping through *Playgirl* or *Viva*. The sight of a man occupying an accepted female place or pose shows how ludicrous they can be. And one of the more subtle aspects of the film is the way in which Judy Geeson and Christian Roberts reverse body language; as a man Judy's movements become freer, more open and self possessed, while Christian, as a woman, sits self consciously cramped

Joan (Judy Geeson) and her secretary Henry (Danny Farnham) in *Put yourself in my place*.



Laura Mulvey

admit what she does). There is an implicit identity in both films between the economic position of the woman and that of the man she falls in love with. In *Fear Eats The Soul* the two protagonists belong to the main sectors of casual, unorganised labour that capitalist society depends on but refuses to allow the recognition due to a necessary integral part of the work force. Nor are they treated as serious workers by the unions, who take the casual intermittent nature of the work as more important than the level of exploitation and thus its meaning for the capitalist economy as a whole. In a brief, tragic moment the factors involved are summarised in a very typical Fassbinder vignette: the cleaning women decide to demand a new rate and exclude the Yugoslav girl who has joined them at a lower rate. Here the lowest link in the alternating chain of Man/Woman Indigenous Worker/Immigrant Worker appears pathetically as a sign of the past and the future, underlining the closeness of Indigenous Woman and Immigrant Man. In the Sirk film, acted out though it is within the confines of the bourgeoisie, there is also a parallel economic interest between the protagonists. The isolated unproductive labour of the house-wife is comparable to the isolated unproductive labour of the gardener. But here both strive to reach the logical conclusion and achieve an economic interdependence on each other alone: the gardener to be free of all exchange and the widow to find her place as an equal and useful partner in the primeval division of labour that has always played such a part in the rural American dream.

The sexual implications of both films are complex and can only be touched on here. The higher social status of the woman allows her to find a sexual fulfilment and equality that she has not previously experienced. But at the same time, in a subtle role-reversal, the man can easily slip into the function of sex-object, as when Emmi asserts her triumph over the other women and displays Ali to them as a man would a woman. Sirk has often dealt with the humiliation heaped on a woman whose child-bearing function has been performed and who still publicly asserts her active sexuality. It is the shock of the mother who refuses to be made a back number which brings directly on to her the otherwise indifferent gaze of her neighbours. In *Fear Eats The Soul* the spectator has the sense of staring alongside the whole neighbourhood; the heroine has literally made a spectacle of herself.

It is very satisfying to see the hidden strengths of the American melodrama brought out so vigorously. Sirk's clear sense of the oppression of family life, the repressive nature of bourgeois society, his irony and unusual grasp of the dilemma of women, should be used and remembered. And Fassbinder does not work, as Sirk did, with one hand tied behind his back by the restrictions of Hollywood. Finally, in structure and composition Fassbinder has learnt from Sirk this crucial fact, as he quotes: 'Sirk has said: you can't make films about things, you can only make films with things; with people, with light, with flowers, with mirrors, with blood, in fact with all the fantastic things that make life worth living.'

* R.W. Fassbinder: Six Films by Douglas Sirk, in a collection *Douglas Sirk* published by Edinburgh Film Festival '72.

it (having learned how to record sound with the London Women's Film Group).

'I asked Judy Geeson to play the wife because she is a friend of mine and I knew that she would help me and try to make it easy for me rather than becoming the professional and making me live up to her standards. None of the rest of the cast were professional actors except Christian Roberts who was also very helpful, not only with his acting but also as a movie maker himself. Instead of keeping rigidly to his role as actor, he helped with the technical side'

At the same time as making *Put yourself in my place* Francine joined the London Women's Film Group, wanting to become more involved in group projects. 'Everytime you do something by yourself you eliminate an argument but that doesn't mean you solve the problem. I eliminate too many arguments.' She says. Nevertheless, *Put yourself in my place* is an excellent short film for provoking arguments, and it can be obtained from The Other Cinema for £5.00 a showing or in a group of women's film from the London Women's Film Group for £12.00.

Rosie Parker

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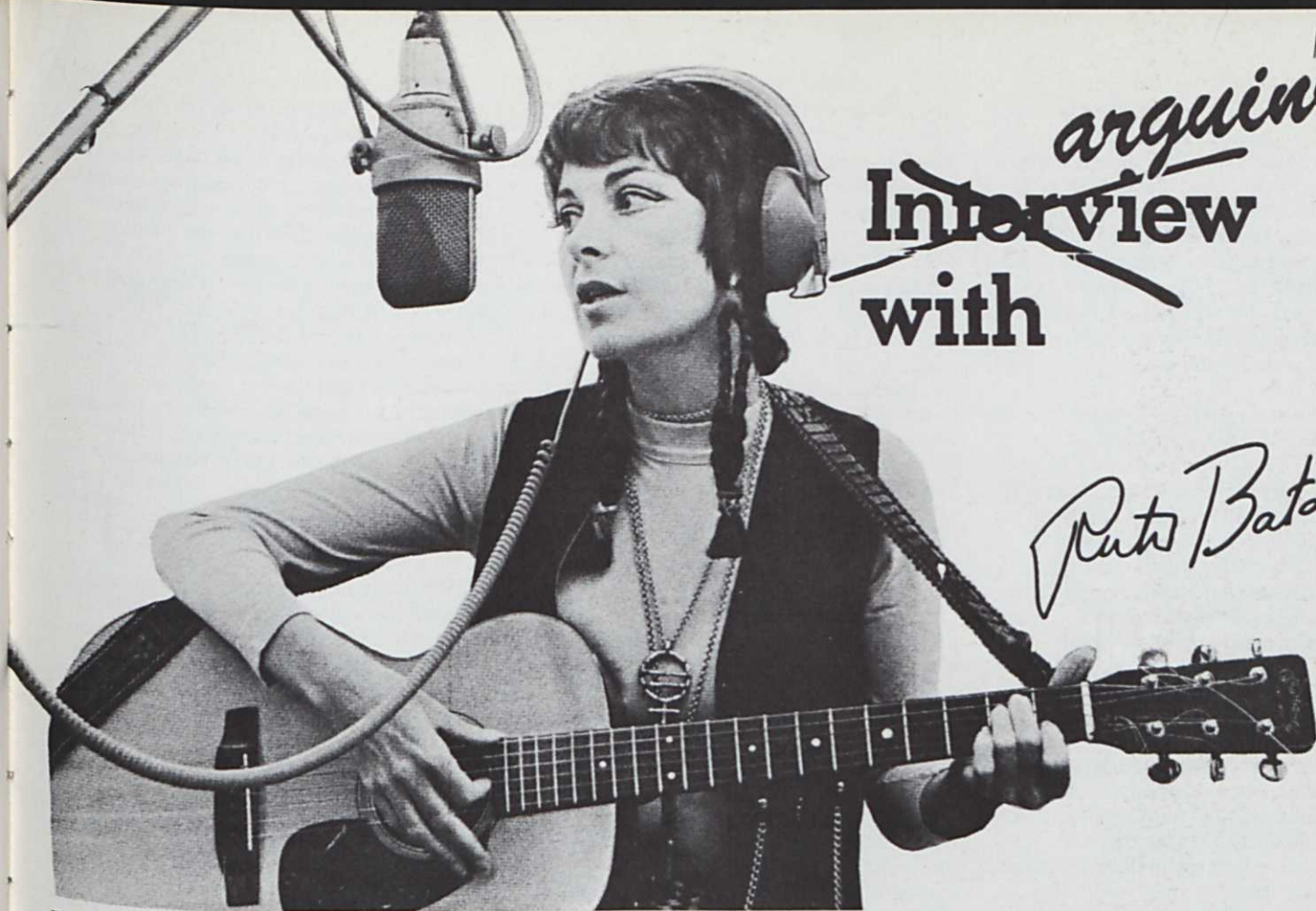
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arguing Interview with

Ruth Batchelor



Ruth works like rabbits fuck' said Georgia Brown and the Ruth Batchelor press biography seems to back that up, quoting examples of her work as a journalist, author, poet, artist and songwriter.

'I have one great fear, it's inactivity. I love to know that my diary is full, I can't be still, even if I write something for myself, it ends up being something commercial that I want to sell. There's the T-shirt designs, three books waiting to be published, a screenplay and a show hopefully going on and then there's the albums.'

In 1962 she wrote an album of songs entitled 'Marriage Is For Dinosaurs' which she says was a send-up on marriage. A couple of years ago, she wrote and produced another LP 'Songs For Women's Liberation/Reviving A Dream' which sells through a mail order company.

'I didn't really get along too well with the women in the movement in New York because I was a rebel within that rebellion. I came out with the album, spent all my own money on it and my so-called sisters - which is a word I don't like a lot - said I was ripping-off the movement. Meanwhile I was giving N.O.W. a dollar for every album I sold.'

Two of the songs from that album, released on Femme Records, 'Barefoot And Pregnant' and 'Stand And Be Counted' were issued as a single earlier this year on Pye, but it was banned by the BBC for being too controversial.

'You can't hit people over the head with women's lib, I've tried and it doesn't work, they don't want it. I also wrote a song for the miners, about the mother of a miner and though Radio London played the demo, I couldn't record it because nobody else would play it, the mining strike was on at the time.'

That particular song will be on Ruth's next album 'A Mother Is A Mother Is A Mother' to be released on Phonogram.

'This album is part of my women's thing, I had done a few songs and I suddenly realised that what I was writing were mother songs. Nobody has ever done this before, it's always the kid singing about the mother. This is from the point

of view of a woman alone, let's say her husband has died or she's divorced and the kids are teenagers and they've gone. 'Walk Away' the single to be released from this album is autobiographical, it's not to a man, it's to my son. Life isn't over when the job of raising kids is done, though the album isn't just personal, it's for all mothers in all situations.'

Ruth's songs have been recorded by Elvis Presley, Jack Jones, Andy Williams, Cliff Richard, Mel Torme, Charles Aznavour, Dionne Warwick, Billy Fury, Bobby Rydell, Anthony Newley, Lucille Ball, Georgia Brown... the list is endless. And then there's film themes, screen plays, musicals...

'Hopefully my musical 'Nice Ladies' will open soon at the Mayfair Theatre, it's nothing but four women in a loo singing about men. It's a loo attendant, a wife, a mistress and a prostitute.'

Why female stereotypes?

'Well I've never been a prostitute and I've never been a loo attendant but I know how to put myself into their heads. I think that's what makes a writer. I can identify with all women and write songs for them because I know how they feel. But I think I can identify with men too.'

Some women are understandably reticent about making themselves vulnerable through their music, how do you feel?

'Vulnerable? I have just written a book called 'With Someone Else's Husband' about my ten year relationship with a married man and it's not fiction. I want to sell it and make money. I'm a great believer in liberation and the first thing I want to do is liberate myself from poverty.'

You don't seem to be poverty stricken to me

'Well you don't know do you? Everything is relative. I gave up millions of dollars when I left the father of my two children. I gave up the swimming pools and sunken bath tubs to get out.'

Was it before you had the children that you became involved in writing?

'There was no "before I had the children". A - I was born married and B - I was born a mother. I was first married at sixteen, I've been married three times and I was eighteen when I became a mother. So when it all happens that early, well you spend the whole time worrying about other people.'

If you learned that a situation like marriage wasn't the answer, why go back and do it again?

'The first time I wanted to get away from my mother and school. When I was sixteen, the world was a lot different than it is now. Living in a small town in Southern California, you even thought you had to be a virgin to be married. I mean you just didn't 'do it' and if you did, then you better damn well marry that boy or else God was gonna punish you and so was everybody else. He was a boyfriend I'd been going with since I was fourteen but within a year I knew I'd outgrown that situation. I split to New York and never saw him again.'

When I met the second one, I was looking for daddy. He was fifteen years older than me and very rich, I was modelling, acting and starving. He was a widower, a World War II hero and a drunk. I thought if I married him and gave him babies, he'd become a perfect person and I'd save his life. I really believed that at eighteen. Nothing changed, he got worse, I had two kids and after a seven year 'jail sentence', I left.

The third time I was really father shopping, I'd raised the kids alone for seven years and just got tired of carrying the whole load. So Mr Perfect walked in the door, worked for IBM and seemed to be the answer to my prayers. The kids and I liked him, he was a good lover and he encouraged my writing. But I ended up getting a third son.

So there was no-one around to give you strength to continue?

No way, it was the opposite. If you don't rebel, you don't survive and I'm a survivor. I've made as few compromises with life as I can possibly make - living in a society which brainwashes us from hundreds of years ago. I only have to take

care of me now. My kids come over and visit me, I have a very good relationship with both of them, one is a hermit and the other is going to law school. I didn't want to make the same mistakes I felt my mother made. I went into analysis at thirty and had one year of what I would call the school of learning about me. I figured out at that age that the main thing I was walking round with were guilts. Intellectually I know what to do, emotionally I think I'm six years old. But I like being there because to grow up is to face reality and reality is a very ugly thing.

But if you refuse to see things for what they are, you can't change anything.

You can hide and I'm doing it very well. I sound like a contradictory person and I am. There is a child-like quality about my head which keeps me fearless enough to write children's books and about being – quote – the other woman. It's a very unpopular cause you know.

I'm a big nut for causes, I wrote Jean McCarthy's campaign song and George McGovern's, also the first women's lib album in the States. None of these things were going to make me popular. I was Poet In Residence at Screw for a year and my so-called sisters were very annoyed at that because I was also writer at the Village Voice. I wrote outlandish feminist poems that were too far out for the Village Voice so Screw bought them. They were feminist though and I don't regret any of them, they said what I wanted to say.

You seem very strong willed, do you think it comes from bitter experiences?

Well I probably wouldn't have survived to this point if I wasn't blessed with a sense of humour. Yes, there has been a lot of tragedy in my life, my eldest son has an illness and I've had to face that and the marriage break-ups. I'd never get married again unless he was ninety nine, titled, had millions of pounds and gave me a guarantee that he'd die within six months. Do I sound materialistic?

Heartless actually.

Well I'm not, but I do want to survive in a style that I can cope with. I was brought up poor and I don't think there is any great dignity in poverty.

I don't think there is any great dignity in wealth either. Do you think that the amount of effort you put into things has to do with wanting to see some positive feedback or reassurance?

Oh sure.

What makes you so diffuse in your different involvements?

I don't believe in putting all my eggs in one basket. Also in my business, everything is waiting: two years to get a show on, a year to get a song released, you have to be doing other things.

Don't you perform?

I don't like to, I get too scared, sounds funny I know. When I performed for six thousand women in Central Park on the day we marched, I wasn't afraid because I wasn't selling me as a performer. I was singing what I knew they wanted to hear, so it didn't make any difference how I sounded. But when I did the same song on the David Frost show, I was terrified because I was being judged as a performer. I can't put my mouth on the line as a singer when I've worked with some of the best singers in the world.

If everybody applied that to learning to sing or play, they'd never get started.

Don't forget the Beatles put people like me semi

out of business, they started writing their own songs and groups started getting big. I'm no musician, I can barely pick out a tune on guitar, I just do it by ear. I wrote mostly lyrics up until the womens thing started, then I liberated myself from composers.

What kind of feedback have you had on your songs?
I think I write for the masses, I think most people like my songs. I've never had a bad review in my life – until I started writing for women.

The way you talk about it is like there's you and these people called women, you seem to completely disassociate yourself.

Every writer has got to be schizo, I am a camera, I look at things and write about them. Withdraw is a better word. The column I write for Miss London may read frivolously but it's an entertainments column and I'm a show business reporter.

But after being involved in women's liberation, how can you then remove yourself to a watching position only?

I have learned to disassociate myself from everything in the whole world, if I couldn't, then I couldn't survive. Life is too painful for me otherwise.

I think the strength to survive can come from connecting with other people

Enough of it comes out. This show I've written, it's the most painful thing you ever read but I couldn't say it was me going through this kind of pain though I can write it for somebody else.

You need to hide or protect yourself?

No no, not at all, I'm baring everything. There's a song 'Epitaph' that's going on the album from the show, it's saying that's not all there is, a total wanting of something more than what is here and what about the book – being with someone else's husband? Someone told me that by doing the book I was doing in a sister but I'm not, I've made him a better husband for her, only she doesn't know about it. She still doesn't and it's still going on.

Do you think that situation is dishonest? Have you never wanted to talk to her about it?

If anyone is dishonest, it's him. Anyway why should I talk to her? I didn't sign any contracts with her, I'm not married to her, I've never met her. Once you've lived through it for ten years like I have, you'd see things differently. I don't know why I'm doing this interview now, I should be doing it when the Goddamn book comes out. Women in this situation are made to feel like lepers and outcasts.

How did you stay sane for twenty nine years in a Hollywood showbiz situation?

You don't stay sane. I got out, moved to New York for ten years and when that got impossible I moved here.

When you've got a mother who gives you lessons in everything until you're six years old and when you haven't become a Shirley Temple by then you are a has-been...

Why did she want you to be...

Oh who knows? I don't want to talk about that. There's another book about her someplace – no don't quote me on that because she'll sue me.

Your mother will sue you?

Oh sure she will. Absolutely. If I said to you that my mother was nuts and she ever saw Spare Rib, then she would sue me. She makes Martha in

'Virginia Woolf' look like Mary Poppins, you can say that. The good parts of her I'm glad I've got but there are bad parts of her which I've also got and I've tried to get rid of. My father wanted to be an actor but he is a grape, easily crushed a long time ago. When you're brought up as an eldest child in a household like that, you learn to withdraw and go into fantasies or you don't survive. My mother was busy telling me that I'd never make it, that there were many more talented people, more beautiful people – who the hell was I that I thought I could make it? This was after she spent the first six years of my life putting me on stages. Meanwhile, my father was sneaking in the background saying, 'You go make it baby, you be the star I never was, you do it for me' and sneaking me off to studios saying 'Look at my daughter, isn't she great?'

What about your brother and sister?

Oh who cares! My sister is ten years younger than me, married with three kids and she's Mrs Beverly Hills meaning that she doesn't want to get out. My brother is three years younger and he's professionally successful as a private detective or some lunacy job.

So the only one who responded to show business was you?

Sure. And my parents were stupid enough to tell the other two 'Oh Ruthie is our favourite' – really great for the other two, you can imagine. So Ruthie was supposed to do everything including getting Mama mink coats. You see, I think that the kind of drive I impose on myself is all due to Mama. When I wrote my first song for Elvis and told her he was going to record it, she wouldn't believe it. She said, 'Big deal, when I hear it, I'll get drunk'. My mother has never had a drink in her life. So when I finally got the record, I played it to her and put a bottle down in front of her but she said, 'Big deal, when I hear it on the radio I'll get drunk'. This was in Los Angeles and every radio station was playing my song, so I turned on all the radio stations but this time it was, 'When I see the money, I'll get drunk'. So you see, there was no way to ever please this woman, no matter what I did. Even when I took her to the opening night of 'Kid Galahad' which was the movie and there was my name on the screen and he was singing the title song which was mine. I thought at last they would be proud of me, don't forget I was already twenty six. Well she looked around the theatre at all these leather jacketed kids and she said, 'This is your audience? This is who you are writing for? These degenerates?' I was destroyed.

So ten years ago I did a total cut off, it was the only way. Now everything I write is a catharsis, I get rid of it through the typewriter or songs. It isn't really a bad place to be, inside my head. My relationship with this man gives me the strength to say to the rest of the world, 'Go fuck yourself'. We see each other once a month for five days, I'm possessive but I don't want to be possessed. I don't think we could live together, I have to be on my own to write.

What I like narrows down to one word – choice. That's why I work as hard as I work, there are mink coats upstairs that I only wore twice last year but I like to know they're there if I need them. If I feel like taking off somewhere, I like to know that I've got the money for the tickets.

And what else do you want?

To keep working, to entertain and to earn enough money to make myself secure. ✨

by Marion Fudger

Courtesy of N.M.F.

'the only thing is to Do It Yourself'

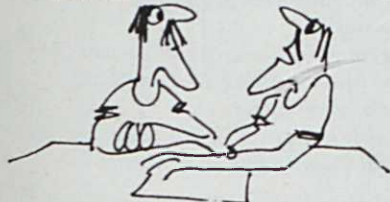
THIS ALBUM IS
A QUALITY PRODUCT...



...AND THE PACKAGING
HAS TO DESCRIBE THE
RICH TALENT
CONTAINED
THEREIN...



... WE NEED TIME LISTINGS
DETAILS OF INSTRUMENTS...



... PRINTED LYRICS...
BIOGRAPHICAL FACTS...



PERSONAL PROFILES
OF THE BOYS,
ENGINEERING
TECHNIQUES...

AND A PHOTOGRAPH
OF A
COUPLE OF
CHICKS WITH
BIG TITS

Tommy Benyon

Here's how **Saffron Summerfield** formed her own record label and produced, recorded, pressed and distributed her first album.

by Marion Fudger

It was the beginning of this year that we started to get together the album and to form the label, Mother Earth Records. There are hassles because you're dealing with people who are used to doing business with big companies like Philips and EMI. I think it amazed them that I was doing it on my own, even the engineer at the studios, a real hard guy who's seen everything, he didn't fall about laughing, he helped me a lot actually.

Being in studios over the years, I've picked up things about recording. Right from the beginning I was never content to just sit in the studio and sing, I wanted to know what was going on. It's a bit baffling but even if they're using a great big machine, it's only doing what a small machine does really. Often a producer doesn't know how it works, it's the engineer, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, that gets the sound.

So first we had to get the musicians together and rehearse, I used three friends and we just double tracked. I paid them a session fee because I wanted it so that if anything happened, they couldn't say, 'Oh shit, she hasn't paid me anything.' It was £15 each for three hours, well actually they got £15 for about eight hours in the end, but that's another story.

Then I had to book the studios and make arrangements. Things had to be well rehearsed so that we wouldn't take up too much studio time - that would have cost more. We rehearsed right up until the day before and then went into the studio and did the first song on the third take and after that everything was done within the third take. Only one song took a lot of messing about and that was one where I was on my own with the harmonium. It was terribly hard work, we did nine songs, some of them were quite long. When you've only got three instruments as well as a voice, you can lose a lot of the immediacy if you do backing tracks and then put a vocal track over it. So we recorded everything at the same time.

They did the mixing the next day, I learnt a big lesson there, I should have been there because they managed to lose one of the vocal tracks. There are lots of little things like that you learn. I'd met the engineer a couple of times before, the studio is a small room at Highbury Corner and it's all taken up with machines, it's 24 track but we only needed to use eight.

So we had this big tape spool with the nine songs on, all mixed and ready and the next step was to get it from tape to a matrix, a lacquered master. That was really funny because everybody recommended Pye who I used to be signed to, and in the end managed to get away from after two years of frustration and really bad experiences. The engineer there said my name was familiar - he'd mixed all my stuff before! They were very good. The actual engineering side of Pye for doing masters are probably the best in the country. That cost about £27 and that's a flat fee and then it's sent on to the presses. I used a company who press for Pye and EMI, the only hang-up with it is being a small company, if EMI have a huge hit, they're going to put me to one side and press like mad on EMI's sudden hit. I had to just keep chasing them up and said we had a release date of August 2nd but it turned out to be much later than that. The presses make a print from the master and with that print they stamp out the grooves and of course the sound on the plastic discs. It costs about another £15 to get the major stamper thing made which they keep on ice for you for about

two years so that if you want more printed later, you just pay the cost of the disc, which is anything from 25 pence to 40 pence per copy. One bloke I rang said it would take six months because of the plastic shortage and another guy said that within three weeks of having the master, they would have it in the bags, in the covers and in my hands for 40 pence each. So it varies a lot, my pressing took six weeks instead of four because it was holiday fortnight.

The cover was done by a separate company but they're all connected because they have deliveries with one another. The label in the middle of the record has to have special glue and paper otherwise it would just go splodge across the record when they stamped it. You can use plastic, a lot of people are using plastic now and it's pressed at the same time as the record.

The whole thing from actually going into the studio to having it in my hands, took nine and a half weeks, that was the first thousand copies. It worked out at five hundred and fifty pounds, that's fifty-five pence each for everything.

Actually the cover wasn't at all what it was supposed to be, this guy was going to do it very cheaply, with a picture of Stonehenge in five colours but he let me down at the last minute. I had to dig up an old negative and literally design it myself, I mean it's nothing special and I thought if I printed the photo in sepia, it would make it a bit better. The printers messed it up a bit though.

The packaging of this album is very basic. When I look at a record, I don't just look at it from the music point of view, I look at the packaging, where the cover and label were made, how it's stuck on, everything about it, in case I can learn something new about production. The sleeve on this album is what you call two colour and that costs about 4½ pence each but for the block to print it, you pay about £50 and that was a very simple block. As long as the cover is good, I mean if you saw this in a record shop with all the other records, would you think it looked cheap or crappy? If you use your imagination you can get round using vast amounts of money, if I'd used another two colours, it would have cost six pence but that would have made it so much dearer for the person buying it at the other end. So keep the costs right down but not at the expense of the music, I would rather have a cover that was very frugal and spend more on the music. The important thing that should catch people's eye is the name because people who go into folk shops must know about folk and maybe if they see my name, they might have a listen. So then it's not the cover, it's the music that's important.

We decided to do a mail order service and managed to get the record talked about in the music press and put in some adverts, so we had people writing asking for it. It was amazing, we were inundated the first week. So they were buying the record without having heard it because the reviews didn't happen until later. I think their response was based on a certain following built up over the last few years in folk clubs; also I've done some tapes for the BBC which must have helped. We've actually sold and got the money for over two hundred, it's like a dream when I think about it, it was literally blood sweat and tears that went into it. I took twenty albums up to a festival in Scotland that I was booked for, and I sold them within the first three days. So I'm going to see how we get on with the

rest and then it's basically down to personal appearances and taking them round with me.

There will only be about seven or eight record shops in the country handling them, and they are specialist shops. So that will give me the chance to really build up the mail order, it's a way of cutting out the distributors and their cut. It's like Spare Rib's problems in the newsagents, it's not going to be put to the fore so it's up to you to try and get subscriptions so that the money is there for you to work with. It's the same with the record.

Ninety-nine percent of the reason for doing this is because I want to be in charge of what's happening to me and maybe help other people. Now there's one percent in my head that says to me that if a record company wanted me to do one of my songs as a single, then as it's my label, I'm in a strong position to negotiate. That's what a manager should have done if I'd had one but in my experience managers have always done everything wrong. I'm really not interested in making a lot of money. I'm interested in making a living and being in control of it. So if they don't like my terms, I can say forget it because it doesn't bother me anymore. There are so many crooks in the industry and people who make you wild promises, the only thing is to do it yourself.

I was offered a contract by a big record company just as I was getting into this but their deals are paying you so much per record, say



£250 and paying for the making of it and then taking everything they can make. It's disgusting. You know, once your voice is on that tape, it becomes their property, it doesn't even have to be released. If you read the six pages of print on a contract, you'll see that they completely own you.

My mother has been really helpful, she's not just put the money up, she's shown me a lot of mistakes that she's made over the years, I think she would have liked to have done something like me when she was younger.

Another thing is, there are a lot of women singers who are writing really good stuff and working in clubs and I know they could sell maybe a thousand albums over a year. So the next person to be on the label will be a girl from the North. She's far more folky than me and she does a lot of industrial songs about workers' problems from the woman's point of view, they're good songs and they really come across. She's never done an album either, so it will be a nice thing to do.

So if anyone wants to make a demo or needs any advice or wants to write to me about anything, it'd be a good idea and experience for me too. For instance, if you go to the studios that I used, through me, the guy will only charge you £5 per hour and a quid for the tape which is great, but if you go on your own, he might charge you more.

You can reach me at Natural Life Promotions, 23 Francis Road, Watford, Herts.

Glossary

Track: a layer of recorded sound which can be either a single instrument or voice, or a combination.

Double tracking: to strengthen a vocal or instrumental sound by recording the same portion twice and to blend the two versions together to give the effect of dueting.

Backing track: the entire recording minus the vocals (as extensively used on Top Of The Pops to simulate a live performance.)

Mixing: the blending together of the tracks into what the producer considers to be the right noise.

4, 8, 16, 24 or 32 track: this indicates the possible number of tracks that a particular machine is capable of recording.

Matrix or master: the first stage in transfer from tape to disc. ☼

MUSIC NEWS...

This is the first editorial of the writer's owned 'Let It Rock'.

'In November you'll be able to buy the first issue of Let It Rock since July. The reasons for this gap in publication are complicated and boring. But to cut a long story short, after a series of disagreements with the publisher it seemed that the only way to preserve the integrity of L.I.R. was for the writers and editorial staff to publish the magazine themselves.

The result is this issue, the first of many to be published by the Rock Writers'

The Moon in June Robert Wyatt

*I can still remember the first time that we played on Top Gear;
And though each little song
Was less than three minutes long,
Mike squeezed a solo in somehow*

*And, although we like our longer tunes,
It seems polite to cut them down, to little bits,
they might be hits, who gives them after all;
Tell me how would you feel, in the place of John Peel,
You just can't please all the musicians all the time.*

*Playing now is lovely,
Here in the B.B.C.
We're free to play almost as long and as loud
As a jazz group or an orchestra on Radio 3.
There are dance halls and theatres with acoustic works and things,
Not forgetting the extra facilities
Such as the tea machine
Just along the corridor*

*And so to all our mates like Kevin
Caravan,
and the old Pink Floyd,
Allow me to recommend Top Gear
Despite its extraordinary name.
Yes, playing, playing now is lovely, here in the B.B.C.*

*We're free to play almost as long and as loud
As the foreign language classes, and that John Cage interview, and the jazz groups, and the orchestras on Radio 3.*

*Pop stars drink each others wine, plough each others earth
Hoping for companionship, and then perhaps revert*



*Co-operative. This means that instead of having a publisher forever breathing down the necks of writers, they elect a committee to bring out each issue. One of the most important things about L.I.R. is the fantastic response it gets from readers, through letters, articles etc. And they hope this will continue as they try to make the best rock magazine around even better. They would particularly welcome contributions and ideas from women.' SF
Subscriptions, enquiries or contributions should be sent to: The Rock Writers' Co-operative, C/O Dave Laing, 23a Aberdare Gardens, London, N.W.6.*

Hopefully others will learn from Gilbert O'Sullivan's mistake in bringing out his recent single 'A Woman's Place'. The following is an extract from an interview with him by Paul Gambaccini in N.M.E.

'I didn't realise the problems 'A Woman's Place' would bring. All sorts of women's groups have complained. I'm being interviewed in Hamburg tomorrow by someone from a Woman's Hour programme who had about five hundred complaints. In America most radio stations wouldn't touch it with a barge pole. I didn't think people would take it so seriously, but it's my mistake. I asked for it to be a single because it was one of the first ones from the album finished and we wanted a single. That's not the right way to choose a single.' MF

*Plant seeds in fresher plots of earth;
Bound up in concerts and dreams and fears
of worse things to come they never do,
things stay the same.*

Music making still performs the normal functions:

*Background noise to people eating and talking and drinking and smoking,
That's alright by us
Don't think that we're complaining
After all its only leisure time isn't it.*

*I could almost sing this song in a nice tone of voice
If I had to, I'd be glad to.*

*It's awfully nice to be here so lets open the theatre and get busy, we'd be mad to.
But if you can refrain you just can't close the mind of a kiddy or young lady
And if you come from the sun
You just can't fool the mums into thinking that you're alright really
So, before this feeling dies
Remember, I could be telling lies.
How I love your eyes
See how the time flies
I think it's so great you seem to change your face by working and playing
Something new in every way
Can be yours in a day, but I wonder
What I'm really saying
So just before this feeling dies
Remember I may be telling lies, falsehoods, white lies, adverts, idle chat, fancies, half truths, rumours, and just lies, plain lies.*

*I shan't say one more word;
So, instead I'll play drums.*

From a radio broadcast, summer 1969. (Some words may be wrong) His most recent album was released last month on Virgin records entitled 'Rock Bottom'.

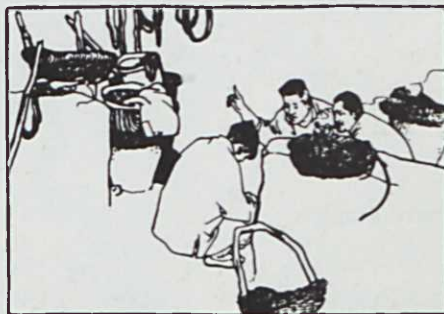
R. Wernham

LI SHUANGSHUANG

Our serial ends this month, with Xiwang recognising Li-Shuangshuang's new politics



177. The big-character poster had not been up long before the branch secretary found Xiwang to hear about the situation. As they were talking about it, Jin Qiao came running along and grasped the branch secretary by the hand. "Old Uncle Progressive, I'm covered with shame! I was wrong, wrong! I confess to the organization. . ."



178. Jin Qiao then admitted their corruption. Xiwang felt a bit uneasy and so he said, "Younger Brother Jin Qiao, I exposed you for your own good. You probably loathe me for it but that's up to you! From now on I'm going to speak out!"



179. The branch secretary said warmly to Jin Qiao, "If you've done something wrong you must be brave enough to admit it. You'll have to return the money and also explain to the commune members what has happened!" Jin Qiao looked thankfully at Xiwang and Xiwang no longer felt uneasy.



180. He left the branch secretary's home feeling very happy and caught sight of Er Chun who was waving a newspaper. "Er Chun," he shouted, "what's happened?" Er Chun pointed to a photograph in the paper and asked, "Do you recognize who this is?"



181. Xiwang jumped forward and glanced at it and then cried out in surprise, "It's your aunt Shuangshuang! She's in the paper!" "Yes," said Er Chun, his eyes wide. "Our production team's hard work, the successful operating of each according to his work, the excellent harvest, it's all in the paper!"



182. Xiwang said, "Ah, I was worried before about her quick tongue stirring up trouble, but now I know for sure what a good type she is!" Er Chun said, "Don't people also call you a 'good type'?" Xiwang threw back his head. "Me? I'm an old style 'good type'; she's a new style 'good type.' Politics takes command in the new style!"



183. "Er Chun, what tricks are you playing on your stupid uncle this time?" The two turned and saw that it was Shuangshuang. Er Chun, jumping up, said, "Aunt, you ask Xiwang—he was just boasting about how beautiful you'd become!"



184. Shuangshuang wanted to box his ears but Er Chun ran off with a laugh. She asked Xiwang what he had been bragging about. Xiwang thought for a long while and then mumbled, "Ah, I said that you were beautiful, and that's the truth! You've really become both clever and beautiful!"



185. Shuangshuang gave him a playful punch and smiled. "I'm not beautiful and I've got to spend the rest of my life with you!" Xiwang replied with unexpected seriousness, "As for me, one life time with you is not enough. It should be two!"

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- and the cheapest - multi-purpose baby carrier you can buy.**

- New freedom for everyone with a baby •
- Instead of clumsy prams and pushchairs which have to be folded and unfolded it leaves your hands and arms free.
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- It's light, weighs only 14oz, and washable.
- It's made to last in navy blue canvas.
- It has a fully padded head-rest for the new born and it's roomy enough for a toddler.

We decided we had to make this baby carrier a Spare Rib Christmas offer after Constance took it round to a friend, whose colicky, insomniac three week old snuggled down at once and fell asleep for the first time without tears while her mother made coffee.



The sling costs £4.25 (postage and packing included). Please make cheques payable to Spare Ribs Ltd, and send with this coupon to Spare Rib, c/o Easy Rider, 28 Christchurch Avenue, London NW6



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